CLOSET-PRAYER
A
Christian Duty:
OR, A
TREATISE
UPON *MAT.* VI. 6.

Tending to prove that the Worship of God in Secret, is the indispensible Duty of all Christians; both by sundry Examples and Arguments.

TOGETHER,

With a severe Rebuke of Christians for their Neglect of, or Negligence in, the Duty of Closet-Prayer? And many Directions for the managing thereof, Exhortations to it, Objections answered, Cases of Conscience cleared.

By *O. HEYWOOD*, Minister of the Gospel.

JER. XIII. 17.

But if ye will not hear it, my Soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lords Flock is carried away captive.

London, Printed for *Tho. Parkhurst* at the *Bible* and *three Crowns* at the lower end of *Cheapside*, 1688.

Baptismall bonds renewed being som
meditation one psal 50:5 gather my
saints together unto me thos yt have
made a couentant with me bissarifice
Sure mercis of David Israels
amentation ofter ye lord
the holy life & happy deth of Mr
John Angeir
Advice to an only child or excellent
counsell to all young persons
Best Intaile a discourse 2: sam 23:5
Family Alter a discourse Gen 35:2:3
to promot ye worship of god in
privat famlys. meetness for
heaven one Colo 1:12 the new
creature one Gola 6:15 the generall
assembly or a discour of ye
[illegible]ring of all saints to christ

THE EPISTLE to the READER: Especially to the strict and serious Professor of Christianity.

Christian Reader,

THE power of Godliness is much spoken of, but (I am afraid) very rarely to be found amongst [*even*] *famous Professors: Most content themselves with external visible duties, which Formalists may carry on with as much seeming zeal and applause as sincere worshippers: A formal spirit is the disease of the present day: the beams of Gospel-light, have so far extracted an assent to fundamental truths, and the necessity of some practical duties, that 'tis a shame in some places not to have a Form of Godliness: Many will be found Orthodox in their Judgments, and externally conformable in their practices; yet without a principle of Grace in their hearts, or the life of Religion in their Lives, in the day of accounts; witness the foolish Virgins. Thousands do finally miscarry besides the grosly prophane: Some go to Hell with a candle in their hands, Christs Colours in their hats, his Word in their mouths, and in the habit of Religion: Every one is not a Saint, that looks like one; a painted picture makes a fair shew, but wants life: A Formalist will be comely indeed, if animated with the truth of grace: But the leaven of hypocrisie spoyls many good duties: This was that leaven of the Pharisees that sowred their prayers, and rendred them distast ful to*

God: They made Religious duties a stage to act vain glory upon, their Prayers had a thick shell and little kernel. Our Saviour would not have the Saints like them. Christs Disciples must do some singular thing, more than others; Their righteousness must go beyond that of the Scribes and Pharisees: Sincerity is that spirit and life that is to run through Religion: else it is a Body without a Soul; or Cloaths without the Man: This is the chief drift of our Saviours teaching, and main Design of Gospel Commands, to render Professors sincere and spiritual, approving their hearts to God in Evangelical performances. I have many times bewailed the condition of those who are very busie in Externals of Religion abroad, and are grosly negligent of the main Essentials at home. They are like those who are propping up some remote members of their body, while their Vitals are wasting in a languishing Consumption: These are like a Man in a Feaver, his face and hands burn, but his heart shakes and quivers for cold: These I may call Pepper-professors, hot in the mouth, but cold at the stomach: There are thousands in the World will run many miles to hear a Sermon, will countenance the best Preachers, will read the Scriptures and good Books, will pray in their Families, yea keep dayes of fasting and Prayer with others, that yet will not set about heart-work and flesh-displeasing duties, of mortifying beloved lusts, loving, forgiving and praying for enemies; —yea that will not set themselves solemnly to the duties of Meditation, Self-examination, and secret Prayer: the Vessel will not stir except the wind of applause blow the sails; these are like the Nightingale in the wood, of which it is recorded, that she sings most sweetly when she thinks any is near her. An Hypocrite can pray best, when taken notice of by men, you will seldom see him at work with his heart in a Closet: he is of the mind of those carnal persons of Christs natural kindred, Joh. 7.4. *who said to Christ,* If thou do these things, shew thy self to the World: For, *saith*

ſaith the Text, ver. 5. neither did his brethren believe in him: q. d. *Such as carry on duties, or counſel others to ſuch undertakings as may expoſe them to publick view for oſtentation, declare plainly they want true grace, which makes perſons Jews inwardly*, whoſe circumciſion is of the heart, in the Spirit, whoſe praiſe is not of men, but of God: *Rom.* 2. 29. The main trade of a Chriſtian, is his Home-trade, *as one ſaith, which is ſpent in ſecret betwixt God and his own ſoul: here he drives an unknown Trade, he is at Heaven and home again, richly laden in his thoughts with heavenly meditations, before the World knows where he hath been.*

Gurnal's Chriſtian Armour, *Chap.* 12. *Sect.* 3. *p.* 304.

The conſideration of theſe things hath engaged me to ſpend ſome thoughts, concerning this great and much neglected Duty of Cloſet-Prayer; which when I had delivered, and ſeveral had got Copies thereof, it was judged fit for the Preſs, ſome hopes conceived of its further uſefulneſs; I peruſed it again, and methodized it into this form, and communicated my thoughts to ſome concerning the publication of it. A friend gave me notice there was a Book extant upon the ſame Subject, which I enquired after, and found one of Mr. Brooks *on the ſame Text: That Book I look'd over, and was ready to think it would ſave me a labour; but, upon ſecond thoughts, I conſidered that this might fall into ſome hands that would not; that ſeveral men writing on the ſame Subject may be uſeful, is ordinary; that our Method and moſt of our Matter is different; for I had finiſh'd mine before I ſaw the other, except two or three leaves in the cloſe: Beſides that, the other is larger, this a ſmall Piece, and more portable, as a pocket-book, or* Vade mecum: *let it be then a ſhort Appendix to that excellent Piece.*

I am heartily glad, any of Gods ſervants have ſet themſelves to promote this part of practical piety; 'tis an excellent deſign, and I am well aſſured, if Chriſtians were more

in their Cloſets with God, their own ſouls would thrive better, and things would ſucceed better abroad; Mr. Rogers *being ſilenced from publick work, deſired his Hearers to ſpend that time they were wont to come to his Lecture in, in ſerious Prayer and Meditation in their Cloſets, and he was confident Satan would be a loſer, and their ſouls gainers by that providence: And this I can affirm, that if perſons would ſpend part of that time in ſecret Prayer they take to run abroad to Sermons in, they would be better proficients: Not but that hearing the word is neceſſary, and ſo is this; nor muſt the one juſtle out the other: yea, theſe ſecret duties help us to profit by publick Ordinances. If dung be poured down on heaps in the field, it doth no good; it muſt be ſpread abroad, before it make fruitful ground. The plaiſter heals not, except it be applyed; ſo the Word muſt be ſpread on our hearts by ſerious and ſecret Meditation and Application, or elſe it will never make our ſouls healthful and fruitful; and then we muſt pray over it, for the ſhowers of divine grace to waſh it and work it into our hearts: Many Sermons are loſt for want of ſouls taking them home to their Cloſets, and turning them to Prayer: I fear all will be little enough that Miniſters can preach or write upon this Theam; I doubt ſtill, this work will be either totally neglected or negligently performed: it's an hard work, the Spirit muſt travel in it; and (ſaith good Mr.* Bains*) the Saints can endure better to hear an hour, than to pray a quarter: yea our trifling hearts will make any excuſe to ſhift from this duty, or ſhuffle it off; nay, though it be in exchange for another, a ſign the work is of God, and tending much to the ſouls good, or elſe Satan and our corrupt hearts would never ſo much hinder or oppoſe it.*

Poor Soul, it may be thou lookeſt abroad, and ſeeſt much wickedneſs committed, holineſs perſecuted, thy God diſhonoured, many things out of order, thou wanteſt a capacity to bring a remedy: I muſt therefore ſay to thee as it's reported, Albertus Crantzius *ſaid to* Luther, *when he began*

to

to oppoſe the Pope, [Frater vade in cellam, & dic, Miſerere mei Deus:] *Brother, go into thy cell, and ſay, God be merciful unto me; ſo ſay I. Alas, thy intereſt and influence reacheth but a little way to mend a wicked world, (though thou muſt ſeek to perform as far as thy place and calling extends;) but go thy way to thy God in thy Cloſet, bewail thy ſins, and the ſins of others: plead with God for thine own ſoul: Buſie thy ſelf about thy ſelf, ſet all ſtraight at home, take heed of that which the poor Church complains of,* Cant. 1. 6. They made me the keeper of the Vineyards, but mine own Vineyard have I not kept. *Oh leave other things undone, rather than this great matter, that concerns the affairs of thine own ſoul.*

Mr. Fox *tells us of one* Peter Moyce, *a* German *Martyr, being called before the Synod at* Dornick, *they began to examine him in certain Articles of Religion, to whom as he was about to anſwer boldly and expreſly to every point, they interrupting him, bad him ſay in two words,* Yea *or* Nay. *Then, ſaid he, if you will not ſuffer me to anſwer for my ſelf in things of ſuch importance, ſend me to my Priſon again among my Toads and Frogs, which will not interrupt me while I talk with my Lord my God. Oh Chriſtian, the time may come, when men may ſtop thy mouth, and will not ſuffer thee to witneſs a good confeſſion, withdraw thy ſelf from men, and retire unto thy God, who will make thee freely welcom to pour out thy ſoul to him in ſecret: He'l neither ſtop thy mouth nor ſtop his ear; he bids thee,* Open thy mouth wide, *Pſal.* 81. 10. *And he tells thee,* His ear is open to thy cry, *Pſal.* 34. 15. *Thou canſt not ask ſuch great things as he can and will give: Only ſee thou beeſt a Child of God. Naturaliſts tell of a precious Stone of an excellent vertue, yet loſeth all its efficacy when 'tis put into a dead mans mouth: ſo Prayer in the lips of a Saint or a righteous man, availeth much; but the Prayer of the wicked is not only ineffectual, but*

Acts & Mon. 2 *Vol. lib.* 8. *fol.* 122.

in their Closets with God, their own souls would thrive better, and things would succeed better abroad; Mr. Rogers *being silenced from publick work, desired his Hearers to spend that time they were wont to come to his Lecture in, in serious Prayer and Meditation in their Closets, and he was confident Satan would be a loser, and their souls gainers by that providence: And this I can affirm, that if persons would spend part of that time in secret Prayer they take to run abroad to Sermons in, they would be better proficients: Not but that hearing the word is necessary, and so is this; nor must the one justle out the other: yea, these secret duties help us to profit by publick Ordinances. If dung be poured down on heaps in the field, it doth no good; it must be spread abroad, before it make fruitful ground. The plaister heals not, except it be applyed; so the Word must be spread on our hearts by serious and secret Meditation and Application, or else it will never make our souls healthful and fruitful; and then we must pray over it, for the showers of divine grace to wash it and work it into our hearts: Many Sermons are lost for want of souls taking them home to their Closets, and turning them to Prayer: I fear all will be little enough that Ministers can preach or write upon this Theam; I doubt still, this work will be either totally neglected or negligently performed: it's an hard work, the Spirit must travel in it; and (saith good Mr.* Bains*) the Saints can endure better to hear an hour, than to pray a quarter: yea our trifling hearts will make any excuse to shift from this duty, or shuffle it off; nay, though it be in exchange for another, a sign the work is of God, and tending much to the souls good, or else Satan and our corrupt hearts would never so much hinder or oppose it.*

Poor Soul, it may be thou lookest abroad, and seest much wickedness committed, holiness persecuted, thy God dishonoured, many things out of order, thou wantest a capacity to bring a remedy: I must therefore say to thee as it's reported, Albertus Crantzius *said to* Luther, *when he began*

to

to oppose the Pope, [Frater vade in cellam, & dic, Miserere mei Deus:] *Brother, go into thy cell, and say, God be merciful unto me; so say I. Alas, thy interest and influence reacheth but a little way to mend a wicked world, (though thou must seek to perform as far as thy place and calling extends;) but go thy way to thy God in thy Closet, bewail thy sins, and the sins of others: plead with God for thine own soul: Busie thy self about thy self, set all straight at home, take heed of that which the poor Church complains of,* Cant. 1. 6. They made me the keeper of the Vineyards, but mine own Vineyard have I not kept. *Oh leave other things undone, rather than this great matter, that concerns the affairs of thine own soul.*

Mr. Fox *tells us of one* Peter Moyce, *a* German *Martyr, being called before the Synod at* Dornick, *they began to examine him in certain Articles of Religion, to whom as he was about to answer boldly and expresly to every point, they interrupting him, bad him say in two words,* Yea *or* Nay. *Then, said he, if you will not suffer me to answer for my self in things of such importance, send me to my Prison again among my Toads and Frogs, which will not interrupt me while I talk with my Lord my God. Oh Christian, the time may come, when men may stop thy mouth, and will not suffer thee to witness a good confession, withdraw thy self from men, and retire unto thy God, who will make thee freely welcom to pour out thy soul to him in secret: He'l neither stop thy mouth nor stop his ear; he bids thee,* Open thy mouth wide, *Psal.* 81. 10. *And he tells thee,* His ear is open to thy cry, *Psal.* 34. 15. *Thou canst not ask such great things as he can and will give: Only see thou beest a Child of God. Naturalists tell of a precious Stone of an excellent vertue, yet loseth all its efficacy when 'tis put into a dead mans mouth: so Prayer in the lips of a Saint or a righteous man, availeth much; but the Prayer of the wicked is not only ineffectual, but abo-*

Acts & Mon. 2 *Vol. lib.* 8. *fol.* 122.

abominable to God: See to your ſtate, and then ſee that you pray aright, for manner, matter, end: many ask and receive not, becauſe they ask amiſs: Above all, Soul, in thy ſecret addreſſes to God, take heed of a trifling ſpirit; thou'lt find moſt ado with thy ſelf herein: our wanton ſpirits are loath to be pent up in a narrow room of a ſpiritual performance; we love to take our liberty in ranging abroad to a thouſand objects: but Chriſtian, as thou loveſt thy peace, thy Soul, thy God, look to thy ſpirit in ſecret Prayer: Do not trifle away thy time upon thy knees, let not thy words freeze as they come from thee, let no diſcouragements beat thee off: the Woman of Canaan, *as one ſaith, takes the Bullets that Chriſt ſhot at her, and with an humble boldneſs of faith, ſends them back again in Prayer; which indeed reach'd his heart, and prevailed with God for mercy.*

But, I ſhall inlarge no more at preſent, but refer thee to this ſmall Treatiſe, wherewith I have (according to my poor talent) laid before thee this great duty: What effect it ſhall have I know not, my God knows, in whoſe hands the bleſſing of our endeavours lyes; Get alone and pray over this Book, and for the unworthy ſinful Author, as he deſires to do for thee into whoſe hands this may come: let our Prayers daily meet at the Throne of Grace, till our ſouls meet before the Throne of God; if thou receiveſt any good by this or any other work this poor worm hath handed to thee, aſcribe nothing to the inſtrument, but all to the agent, and efficient: our good God, from whom comes every good and perfect gift, diſdains not the work for the plainneſs of the ſtyle; it was purpoſely put in this dreſs for the Vulgar's benefit; and if it or my ſelf be expoſed to cenſure for that, 'tis welcom. I write not to pleaſe learned Scholars, but to profit plain Chriſtians; whoſe ſpiritual good I prefer above any credit to my ſelf. I am ſure, there is none due: there being few of my brethren but they tranſcend me in parts and learning; But by the grace of God

I am what I am, 1 *Cor.* 15. 10. *Nor is that grace altogether in vain: for as it hath helped me in my labours, ſo he hath in ſome meaſure bleſſed my labours, though I be nothing, the leaſt of Saints, not meet to be called a Miniſter. Did thoſe that read my labours know me, they would be ready to deſpiſe my undertakings: This I ſpeak, becauſe my former book hath found ſuch good acceptance, and this is ſo much deſired. And that no man think of me, above what he knoweth to be in me: my heart hath been near fainting through diſcouragements from my great weakneſs, had I not been ſupported many a time with that word, in* 2 Cor. 4.7. But we have this treaſure in earthen veſſels, that the excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of Man. *Whence I gather, that God can make uſe of weak, unlearned, ſinful Inſtruments to do great works; and he can uſe perſons of mean abilities, to accompliſh his glorious ends, in converting Souls, as well as the profoundeſt Clerks, or wiſeſt men on earth: yea ſometimes he layeth aſide theſe, and rather uſeth the former, that all the glory might be his*; And that no fleſh might glory in his preſence: 1 Cor. 1. 29. *But ſuch as I am or have, is all devoted to the honour of our Redeemer, and welfare of Souls,*

Whiles I am

Octob. 31.
1668.

5 DE60

Oliver Heywood.

The

The CONTENTS of the Book.

CHAP. I.

Sect. 1. The context cleared, pag. 1
Sect. 2. The words explaind 4
Sect. 3. Doctrines raised, 7
Sect. 4. Instances for Closet-Prayer, 11
1. Abraham, ibid.
2. Isaac, 12
3. Jacob, 13
4. Moses, 14
5. David, ibid.
Sect. 5. More Instances of
6. Elijah, 15
7. Jeremiah, 16
8. Daniel, ibid.
9. Peter, 17
10. Jesus Christ, 18

CHAP. II.

Sect. 1. Reason 1. Conveniency of Privacy, 19
For 1 Expostulation, 20
2 Against distraction, 21
Sect. 2. Reas. 2. Relation betwixt God and Soul, 23
1 The hearts free opening to a Father, ibid.
2 God communicates himself to it, 25
Sect. 3. Reas. 3. God sees in secret, i. e. 27
1 He takes notice whether thou pray, ibid.
2 Sees thy secret sins, 28
3 Thou loseſt not thy labour, p. 28
4 Thou owneſt Gods omnipreſence. 29
Sect. 4. Reaſ. 4. God rewards openly, four ways, 31
1. Returning viſible Anſwers, 32
2. Diſcriminating providences, 33
Sect. 5. 3. Increaſe of Graces, 36
Sect. 6. 4. Solemn owning at the great Day, 39

CHAP. III.

Sect. 1. Uſe 1. Of Information, concerning places of Prayer, 41
Sect. 2. The nature of prayer,
1. It is an immediate Worſhip, 43
2. Cannot be interrupted, 44
Sect. 3. 3. The power of Prayer, 46
Sect. 4. 4. The property of a Chriſtian, 49

CHAP. IV.

Sect. 1. Uſe of Reprehenſion, 1. Of Wicked, 52
Sect. 2. 2. Of Godly, for neglecting this; herein, 54
1 They are unlike Jeſus Chriſt, 55
2. Un-

2 *Unlike the Saints of God*, pa.56
3 *Unlike themselves formerly*, 57
Sect. 3. 4 *They lose much spiritual good*, 58
5 *Expose themselves to temptations*, ibid.
6 *They express little love to God*, 59
7 *Gross ingratitude to him*, 60
Sect. 4. 8 *They contradict the Spirits motions*, 61
9 *May be deprived of Helps*, 62
10 *What if Christ surprize them in neglect*. 63

CHAP. V.

Sect. 1. 3. *Use of Instruction about Closet-prayer: wherein are*, 1. *Preparatives to it*, 66
1 *Look to your State*, ib.
2 *Lay aside other business*, 67
Sect. 2. 3 *Set your selves in Gods sight*, 68
4 *Muster up your thoughts & wayes*, 70
Sect. 3. 2 *Essentials required in secret Prayer*, 73
1 *Ingage the heart in it*, ib.
2 *Beg the Spirits assistance*, 75
Sect. 4. 3 *Pray according to Gods will*, pag. 77
4 *In the name of Jesus Christ*, 79

CHAP. VI.

Sect. 1. 3 *Circumstances about Closet-Prayer*, 81
Referring to { *Place*, 82 / *Posture*, ibid. / *Season*, 83 / *Voyce*, 84
Sect. 2. 4 *Duties consequent to it*, 85
1 *Observe Gods appearance*, ibid.
2 *Walk suitably*, 86
Sec. 3. 3 *Wait for Returns* 88
4 *Communicate Experiments*, 89

CHAP. VII.

Sect. 1. *Concerning matter or words of Prayer*, 92
1 *Lords Prayer is paraphrased*, 93
Sect. 2. 2. *Wherein an example propounded from* Jacob, *Exod.* 32. 10. *in ten particulars*. 96

CHAP. VIII.

Sect. 1. 4 *Use of Exhortation to Closet-prayer pressed by ten Expostulatory Arguments*, 101
Sect. 2. *Objections answered, as*, 107
1 *I perform Family-duty, Answ.* ibid.

2. *I*

2 *I am a poor Labouring man, Answ.* p. 108
3 *I am a Servant, and cannot, Answ.* 109
4 *I want a convenient place, Answ.* 110
5 *I know some Christians against it, Answ.* ibid.
Sect. 3. 6 *I find not my heart prepared, Ans.* 111
7 *I meet with temptations, Answ.* 112
8 *I get no good by it, Answ.* 113
9 *I want Gifts for it, Answ.* 114
10 *'Tis too much ado, labour, Answ.* p. 115
Sect. 4. *Cases of conscience answered,* 117
1 *What difference betwixt Saint and Hypocrite?* ibid.
2 *Whether may a man ingage by vow?* 118
3 *How may we know we have communion with God?* 119
4 *What must I do if I find no good?* 120
The whole, concluded with Exhortation. 121

5 DE60

ERRATA.

PAge 28. line 33. r. 3. *God sees:* p. 61. l. 26. for *Sect.* 5. r. *Sect.* 4. p. 117. l. 16. for *Sect.* 5. r. *Sect.* 4.

MATTH. VI. vi.

But thou, when thou prayeſt, enter into thy Cloſet: and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret; and thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly.

CHAP. I. SECT. I.

The Context cleared.

IN this excellent Sermon of our precious Saviour in the Mount, we have both the Goſpel clearly Propounded, and the Law ſolidly expounded: The corrupt and carnal *Phariſees* had degraded God's holy Law from its ſpiritual extent and regiment by their low and literal gloſſes, but our Saviour reſtores it to its dignity and authority over hearts and conſciences.

In this Chapter, the beſt Preacher that ever opened his mouth, doth admirably explain the Adjuncts, Offices, and Exerciſes of true Piety: which are principally three, Alms, Prayer and Faſting; to *ver.* 19.

Particularly, concerning the Duty of *Prayer*, there were

were two material destructive Faults which the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were guilty of; in that sweet and solemn Ordinance: Those were, 1. *Hypocrisie*, 2. *Battologie*, or vain-babling. Jesus Christ rebukes and rectifies both.

1. They were wont to perform their private devotions in publick places, meerly for vain-glory, to be seen of men, as in the *Synagogues*, or in the *Streets*: *ver.* 5. Now for the Disciples practice in this case, he commands them to withdraw themselves out of the view of men, into some solitary place, and there perform that Duty, where they are least exposed to the danger of ostentation: *ver.* 6.

2. Another fault that our Redeemer rebukes in the Duty of Prayer is, vain Repetitions. And though he only mention it here as the Heathens fault, *ver.* 7. yet certainly the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* might also be guilty of it, for they are censured for their long Prayers, *Mat.* 23. 14. Yet upon different accounts. Here the Heathens use vain repetitions that they may move God: There the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* make long Prayers that they may deceive men, and devour Widows houses. This Text saith, *They think they shall be heard for their much speaking*; just as *Baal*'s Priests, 1 *King.* 18. 26. They called on the name of *Baal* from morning even till noon, saying, O *Baal* hear us; they leapt upon the Altar, and cryed aloud, and cut themselves, with knives and lancers, till the blood gushed out upon them. No doubt this was done to move their cruel god (or rather stupid block) to some pity and compassion: Just as the frantick *Papists* do at this day in their self-tormenting penances: But our God who is the searcher of hearts, delights more in ardent affections, than in either extension of the voice, or multiplication of words, or excruciating afflictions of the outward man: Therefore our Saviour tells us, that when we pray, we come not to inform

God

God of any thing he is ignorant of, *ver.* 8. *Your Father knoweth what things you have need of before ye ask him*: But we pray that our own hearts may be affected, and that we may have the condition of acceptance: And for the rectifying of this abuse of vain babling in Prayer, Christ propounds and presents to us an exact draught and compendious platform of Prayer, in that which is commonly called, *The Lords Prayer*: not as though men should say only those words and no more; for then the Apostles had failed in praying in other terms, but that this might be a directory for Prayer. So that every thing we ask, should be reducible to some of those heads mentioned in this perfect platform: So that, as *Cyprian* saith, To pray otherwayes than he hath taught (either as to the manner, or substance of the matter) 'tis not only ignorance but an offence: and indeed we cannot expect to be heard except we ask, as well according to Christs mind as in his name. But this is not the subject I have chosen to insist upon. That which falls under our present cognizance from this Text, is, The modification of Prayer, with respect to the circumstance of privacy, solitariness, or retirement.

Ut aliter orare quam docuit, non Ignorantia sola est, sed & Culpa: Cyp. *de Serm. ad Orat. Domin. pag.* 408.

The Text holds forth the warrant for, and manner of carrying on the great work of Closet-Prayer; a copious Subject, a precious Duty.

In which are
1. The Place for it, *a Closet.*
2. The Closeness of the place, *Door shut.*
3. The Object of the Worship, *Thy Father.*
4. The Arguments to inforce thy Duty:
   1. Gods Omniscience, *he sees.*
   2. His Munificence, *will reward.*

SECT.

SECT. II.

The words opened.

FOr a more distinct opening of the words according to the parts before-mentioned, consider:

1. What is meant by a Closet, here. Some understand and interpret it, not literally but mystically, making an Allegory of it, as though it did import [*interiorem cordis recessum*] the inner recesses or motions of the heart, but though that be a truth and duty, That we must pray in the closet of the heart; yet, I humbly conceive, that is not the proper meaning of this place: for we need not interpret this plain word in such a borrowed sense; since multitudes of Scriptures are so expres, for worshipping God with the heart. Besides, that is not suitable to the scope of the place, which opposeth self-retirement to the Pharisaical modes of devotion: The word then is to be literally taken, and ταμιεῖον in general imports *any secret place* where a thing is laid up: particularly, it signifies a Safe place, or Cupboard, to lay victuals in; or a locked Chest, wherein a treasure is usually reserved: or it's taken (as indeed here and oft else where) for a close or secret chamber, a withdrawing-room, retiring-place, where a person is not seen nor heard, nor yet is disturbed in his devotions by any noise or commotion; a secret conclave or locked Parlour, where no company is to come.

Leigh. *in Crit. Sac. in verb.*

Mat. 24. 26. Luk. 12. 3.

Quemvis locum occultum notat. Par.

2. *Shut thy door*: this word imports yet a further degree of secrecy: *q.d.* that thou maist make thy self to be less observed, shut up thy self in a room; let none come at thee to disturb thee in thy converings with God, bar the door and make it fast: yea let none over-hear thee

thee in thy retired devotions. For, observe it, in true Closet-Prayer there should be an including of the voice as well as the body: some pray so loud in their chambers that they may be heard into the streets; this is not properly Closet-Prayer, since it doth not attain the end of this retirement, which is an approving the heart only to God, and avoiding all shews and occasions of hypocrisie and vain-glory; for it is all one (as to this end) whether the body be seen or the voice be heard: Only remember, this is spoken of secret Prayer; for it doth not exclude publick Prayer in a congregation, where the body is seen, and voice is heard: Yet it doth by a kind of Synecdoche require self-denial, singleness, and sincerity in all kind of Prayer, publick, private, secret, for one part or sign of uprightness in the duty is put for the whole, shutting the door, for integrity of heart in the whole management of this great Affair.

Una specie simplicitatis pro toto genere posita.

3. Here's the object of Prayer: *Pray to thy Father*: Thy business is not with men, but with God; seek therefore to please and injoy him: Nor yet art thou to fetch a compass and pray to Saints and Angels, but go straight to God in the name of Christ, and be sure thou look upon him as under the sweet relation of a tender Father; yea, *Thy Father*. Oh, a sweet word, a blessed word, and such a word as we durst not have taken into our mouths; had it not been for Christ's glorious undertaking to purchase for us the adoption, and this gracious commission, and in the platform of Prayer the prescription; and for God the Father's voluntary condescention. Come then, and fear not, poor Disciple of Christ, come with filial affections, and the Spirit of Adoption, and thou art sure to speed: for this

Quod nomen, nunc nostrum in oratione duderet attingere, nisi ipse nobis sic permisisset orare: Cyprian. *Serm. de Orat. Dom.* p. 414.

paternal relation imports affection, provision, condescention, and compassion. If thou wilt be a Child to him; he will be a Father to thee: 2 *Cor.* 6. 18.

4. Here's the Arguments and Incouragements to this duty of secret Prayer.

1. *Thy Father sees in secret.* All's one to him whether you be in a publick Church, or private Closet; God (whose eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the Sun) sees you in the one place, as well as in the other, and though men see you not, yet content your selves with this, That God and your consciences are competent witnesses of your uprightness; with whom you have to do, and from whom you have your reward.

2. *He will reward thee openly.* There's two things in this expression. 1. They shall be *rewarded.* 2. They shall be *openly rewarded.* So that men shall say, *Verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth: Psal.* 58. 11. The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* do all their works to be seen of men, and of men they have that sorry reward: you do yours in the sight of God, and from him you shall receive your abundant and eternal recompence. Though men see you not, fear not, you shall be seen and accepted by him that searcheth hearts, and knoweth the mind of his Spirit: But of these, more anon.

The sum and design of the Text is this. Thou, my Disciple, seest the plausible practices of the hypocritical *Pharisees*, to gain credit and applause; they perform their private duties in publick places, as Markets and Synagogues, that they may pass among men for eminent Saints; and they are generally so esteemed; that's their reward. But thou that hast given up thy name to me, in the profession of my Name, take my counsel for regulating this sweet Duty of secret Prayer: Let none see what thou goest about, steal time from all observers, withdraw thy self into some Closet or private place; and

and when thou hast made all fast, do thou set thy self in the presence of God, approve thy heart to him, lay open thy bosom before him, tell him all thy grievances; and though no creature is privy to thy secret groans, yet be sure that all thy desires are before God, and thy groaning is not hid from him, and he takes notice of thy tears; and reserves them in a bottle by him, to be rewarded in a visible manner in a seasonable time, thy labour is not in vain, thy work is with the Lord, and thy reward with thy God.

SECT. III.

Doctrines raised, and cleared.

THere are many Doctrines lye couched in the words, I shall but hint them, and pitch upon one.

1. *Prayer is a choice part of Religion*; its a piece of natural worship; though the right ordering of it is by institution, yet 'tis a main part of Religion. Therefore often put in Scripture for the whole service of God: *He that calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*, Rom. 10. 13. A prayerless soul is graceless.

2. *Prayer is a duty much abused*: There's scarce any thing so much perverted and corrupted as this choice duty, by formality, hypocrisie, superstition, base and by-ends, as is clear by these *Pharisees* many wayes, and their younger brethren the *Papists* at this day, *Masses, Dirges, Invocation of Saints*, &c.

3. *There are several sorts of Prayer*: Both as to the kinds, modes, and circumstances. The Apostle distinguisheth of Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks: 1 *Tim.* 2. 1. There's also Publick-Prayer, Family-Prayer, and Closet-Prayer. Now a Christian must pray with all Prayer and Supplication: *Eph.* 6. 18. The last is here insisted on.

4. *A Christian must do nothing for praise or applause*, especially in matters of Religion: It is a base prostituting the highest things of God, to our beastly lusts. It is to feed an humour, and damn the soul with that which should save it. Let no Christians, (as the *Pharisees* here,) make Prayer truckle to their credit, *Phil.* 2. 3. *Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory.*

5. *There are set and stated times of Prayer:* This is hinted in this word, *When*, when thou prayest. A time there must be for it, though the point of time is not determined, yet a time must be set apart for the duty, every day; a Christian must chuse out the fittest time for the duty, by the due use of his liberty and discretion.

6. Circumstances are of great use in all our actions: The streets are proper places to walk, talk, buy and sell in, but not so fit for Prayer; the Church is a fit place for publick devotion, not so for a solemn performance of the duty of secret Prayer. Although mental ejaculations are fit enough in both, yet it's not convenient to kneel down or use outward gestures of secret Prayer there.

7. *Closet-Prayer must be with all secrecy and solitariness:* In a Closet, door shut: As we must not blow a Trumpet when we give Alms, so we must not hold out a flag when we go to wait on God in the Duty of Prayer: It was carnal counsel the brethren of Christ gave him: *Joh.* 7. 4. *Shew thy self to the World.* The reason is given, *v.* 5. *For neither did his brethren believe in him:* A sad sign of carnality!

8. *God alone is the proper object of our Prayers:* Pray to thy Father. As he is the object of our Faith, so of Prayer: For he alone can help, therefore he is to be sought, none else sees our state, or can satisfie souls: *Isa.* 63. 16. *Doubtless thou art our Father, though* Abraham *be ignorant of us.*.

9. In all our addresses to God we must own God as

our

our Father; as having adopted us in Christ: because his, therefore ours: *I ascend* (saith Christ) *to my Father and your Father*, Joh. 20. 17. Indeed by nature we were children of wrath, but by grace children of his Love; so that they may say, as *Isa.* 64. 8. *But now, O Lord, thou art our Father.* Oh plead and improve this relation.

10. *God is omnipresent*: Thy Father which is in secret: the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him, 1 *King.* 8. 27. He filleth all places with his immense and infinite essence: Heaven is his throne; the Earth is his footstool; he is excluded from no place, included in none: for he is without all limitation, dimension, or termination.

Hinc omnipresens est quia nullum est Ubi, unde est exclusus, neq; alicubi est inclusus. Ames. *Med. Theol. lib.* 1. *Cap.* 4. 47.

11. *God is omniscient.* Thy Father which seeth in secret. The darkest night, or secretest closet, or most hidden thought of a reserved heart, can neither hide, or be hid from God's all-seeing eye: *Heb.* 4. 13. God beholds all things in Heaven and on Earth with one simple single act of his Understanding; without composition, discourse, or representation of Species.

12. *Every believing Prayer hath a sure reward:* He will reward thee openly: Not a good word to God, or work for God, shall be lost: *To him that soweth righteousness, shall be a sure reward*, Prov. 11. 18. And we know every right Prayer is a real seed, *Psal.* 126. 6. And it will rise in a full and plentiful crop another day.

13. *The reward of secret Prayer shall be open and manifest:* They have already a reward and gift in secret; Communion with God is an abundant recompence. *In keeping thy Commandments there is great reward:* Psal. 19. 11. But this is a [*præmium ante præmium*] reward before the reward: the other shall be in Heaven before Angels and Men.

14. *A Christians reward is from God:* Thy Father will reward thee: Not men. *Scribes* and *Pharisees* have their reward from men, from men they expect it: Saints expect their reward from God, and God gives it them: Men reward them evil for their good will, and they expect no better: If better come from men, they own it as a gratuity sent from their Father: It's a principle of Religion to know and *believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, Heb. 11. 6. And as God gives a reward, so he is the reward of his Saints, *Gen.* 15. 1. *Yea an exceeding great reward.* It can admit of no Hyperbole, it cannot have a sufficient Emphasis: to enjoy God is a reward sufficient, in and for the service of God. These Doctrines would afford large discourses, but none of these are the subject I shall insist upon.

I shall raise one from the main scope of the Text, which is this.

Doct. *That Closet-Prayer is a Christian Duty.*

Secret Prayer is an Evangelical exercise.

Every child of God may and must perform the duty of Secret Prayer.

As a Christian must pray all manner of Prayer, so in all places, 1 *Tim.* 2. 8. *I will that men pray every where:* And if every where, then in their Closets: This divine Incense should perfume every room, and should ascend to Heaven from Chambers as well as Churches: Any place now is fit for a Divine Oratory; a Saint should give himself to Prayer, and dedicate his house to God; he should (as it were) consecrate every room in his house to be a place of private devotion. *Abraham* reared an Altar to God wherever he came; so must a Christian make every place where he can get close to the duty, a place of Prayer.

Psal. 109. 4.
Psal. 30. *title.*

Mr. *Mede* hath undertaken to prove from *Josh.* 24. 26.

24. 26. That the Jews of old, and Chriſtians in Goſpel-times had their [*Proſeuchæ*, or] praying places, which he thus deſcribes (as to the Jews of old:) *Proſeucha*, ſaith he, was a plot of ground, encompaſſed with a wall, or ſome other like mound or incloſure, and open above much like to our Courts, the uſe properly for Prayer, as the name *Proſeucha* imports: And theſe were without the Cities, as Synagogues were within: Of this (as he thinks) were thoſe in *Act.* 21. 31. and *Luk.* 6. 12. Where Jeſus Chriſt is ſaid to continue all night [ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, *in Proſeucha Dei*] in the place of Prayer, or *Proſeucha* of God. Nor yet do I believe or find, but that the Saints had other praying places, as in houſes and elſewhere as occaſion was offered, even in dwelling houſes, *Act.* 12. 12. But as to this Duty of ſecret Prayer, it muſt not be ſo narrowly confined, but we may go to any Cloſet or private Room where our ſouls may meet with God: And (as one ſaith) we ſhall not fail to find that the Grots and caves lye as open to the cœleſtial influences, as the faireſt and moſt beautiful Temples.

Medes Diatribæ, p. 279.

The life of Dr. Hammond *in a letter*, p. 201.

SECT. IV.

Inſtances of ſeveral in Scripture, that uſed Cloſet-Prayer.

THe Doctrine needs no Explication, but Confirmation: which I ſhall do from Scripture-Inſtances and Reaſons.

We have ſeveral Examples of Patriarchs, Prophets, Apoſtles, that uſed this duty of ſolitary or ſecret Prayer.

1. *Abraham*, the Friend of God, and Father of the faithful, converſed much with his God alone; particu-

larly in this duty of Prayer, *Gen.* 18. 22. When the men, (*i. e.* the created Angels that seemed men) were gone towards *Sodom*, *Abraham stood yet before the Lord*, or *Jehovah*, *i. e.* Jesus Christ, the Angel of the Covenant. Standing is a praying posture, therefore put for prayer; hence *Abraham* drew near and pleaded with God for *Sodom*: That was his errand to God at that time. No doubt he had used this course frequently in other cases: Hence arose that intimacy betwixt God and *Abraham*: So that God talked with him, came to him; and he again discoursed familiarly with God.

Gen. 15. 12. *Chap.* 17. 3.

2. *Isaac*, the son of the Promise, a very contemplative man, therefore 'tis said, *Gen.* 24. 63. *That Isaac went out to meditate in the field at even-tide.* The word signifies as well to Pray as Meditate, 'tis likely he did both in some solitary Walk, where he conversed with his God. The *Chaldee* translates it by praying, but the *Greek* by exercising himself, *i. e.* both in meditation and prayer: And truly there is a near affinity betwixt these two sweet duties, and 'tis usual for a devout soul to fall out of the one into the other, in its retirements. *Soliloquie* in the heart helps to a *colloquie* with God: But here observe *Isaac*'s oratory, which he had in the field, which he used for more privacy; There (saith *Pareus*) he continually poured out Prayers to God, and at this time more earnestly for the happy success of his servant; a singular example of piety; A place it was every way fit for Prayer, especially in solitude where the senses are less drawn off from pious meditations: Some think he was returning from his devotions, and then

שגה
Locutus est ore, vel corde cogitavit; propriè significat, submissa voce loqui, utonantes.

Locus precibus ubiq; commodus; maxime in solitudine, ubi sensus de piis meditationibus minus avocantur. Pareus *in loc.*

then 'tis worth noting, What a ſpeedy reward of his piety, and effect of his prayers was granted: Would all young men take the like courſe for a Wife, they might meet ſeaſonably with a *Rebeckah* in mercy.

3. *Jacob* is a famous inſtance of this choice exerciſe, few like him; he was put to flee, but they could not drive him from his God: They had their meeting places and intercourſe where none ſaw: particulary that remarkable time, *Gen.* 32. 24. *Jacob was left alone: And there wreſtled a man with him until the breaking of the day.* 'Tis likely *Jacob* had ſent his houſhold away on purpoſe that he might wreſtle with God alone: I ſhall not diſpute whether *Jacob* had any extraordinary natural ſtrength of body, I am ſure he had abundance of ſpiritual ſtrength of grace, nor ſhall I take notice of the *Hebrews* ſubtil diſputes concerning this man. *Hoſea* tells us, it was an Angel, yet withal he tell us, *That by his ſtrength he had power with God, Hoſ.* 12. 3,4. Therefore this was God himſelf, the creating, not a created Angel, even Jeſus Chriſt, the Angel that Redeemed him from all evil, whom *Malachi* calls, The Angel of the Covenant, *Mal.* 3. 1. It was God himſelf, *Elohim*, whom *Jacob* overcame in this ſtupendious [*monomachia*, or] conflict. But how did he thus prevail? The Text ſaith, with prayers and tears, he wept and made ſupplication: Now he had gotten God to a-ſide (as it were) and none came to diſtract him, or to part this ſtrong and bleſſed duel; he is reſolved to ſtick to his hold, and not let God go, till he bleſſed him: And good *Jacob* came off a Noble Conqueror; and from that purchaſed the famous name of *Iſrael*: Oh unequal matches! Oh unparallel'd conqueſt! The ſeemingly-adverſe combatant was *Jacobs* only aſſiſtant, and the conquered was the invincible *Jehovah*, and no other ſeconds or ſpectators, but the Infinite God and Worm *Jacob*. Gen. 48. 16.

4. *Moſes*

4. *Moses* was a choice man of God, whom the Scripture characterizeth as a *non-such*, *Deut.* 34. 10. *There arose not a Prophet since in* Israel *like unto* Moses, *whom the Lord knew face to face*: and this intimate acquaintance was obtained, maintained, and exercised by this secret conversing with God: How often do we find the Lord and his servant *Moses* together? and none with them, yea *Moses* only must come near, and the rest must worship afar off: And what business have these familiar Friends one with another? Why, sometimes the Lord speaks to *Moses*, sometimes *Moses* speaks to God in secret prayer: See both together in *Exod.* 32. 9, 10, 11. A strange Scripture, God and *Moses* had been conversing with each other in the mount forty dayes: God tells *Moses*, the people had made them a molten calf, and he was angry and would consume them, and bids *Moses* let him alone, as though *Moses* had bound the hands of omnipotency: Nay then, thinks *Moses*, if my poor people be in this hazard since I am with God, I'le ply the throne of grace, and improve my interest for them: and then he falls close to the work, and besought the Lord his God, and it's said—At this time he alone stood in the gap, and prevailed by his intercession to turn away Gods wrath from *Israel*: Here was a work, and this was the fruit of secret prayer.

Exod. 14. 12.

Psal. 106. 23.

5. *David* the man after Gods own heart, was a man much skilled in secret or closet meditations and prayers: Hence some of his Psalms of Prayer and Praise were first composed in Caves, Wildernesses, and solitary places, *Psal.* 142. Title, *is Maschil of David; a Prayer when he was in the Cave.* And this is for instruction to us, so *Maschil* signifies: Yea, he purposely compiles the 102. *Psal.* as a pattern to all that may be in his case, that is solitary; *As a pelican in the Wilderness, an owl in the desart, or a sparrow alone upon the house top, v.* 6, 7. Then they

they are to pray as he did, and to pour out their complaint before the Lord: Yea, upon a declaration of Gods covenant, designs of mercy to *David* and his house; the good man went either into some private room in his own house, or into the Tent before the Ark, and there set himself, first to meditate, then to pray; for he did both, as that Scripture clearly intimates, 2 *Sam.* 7. 17, 27. And oh what memorable fruits of secret Prayer had *David* frequently! Surely he felt the sweetness of it, both in his soul and body, in his spiritual estate, and political affairs: Therefore he commends it to all, *Psal.* 4. *Commune with your own heart upon your bed* (or in your bed-chamber) and there also offer the sacrifices of righteousness, *and put your trust in the Lord*, *ver.* 4. 5.

SECT. V.

Five more Instances produced.

6. ANother example from Scripture of the performance of this duty of secret prayer, is, the famous man of God *Elijah*, who wrought many miracles, and was mighty in prayer, for so the Apostle *James* testifies of him, *Chap.* 5. 17, 18. that he could shut and open Heaven; he had (as it were) got the Key of the Clouds, to open the windows of Heaven, that it might rain or not rain, according to his word. But how came he by this power? Why, certainly he had great acquaintance with his God in secret. Take one instance what his practice was, 1 *King.* 17. 19. to *ver.* 24. It is the memorable History of raising the Widow womans dead Son. It was a great undertaking: none but God could raise the dead, God is to be implored by earnest Prayer, no place so fit for that great duty as a closet, or some close Chamber, therefore he being to deal with his

God

God in good hard earneſt about this important buſineſs, ſaith the Text, *He carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed, and then he cryed to the Lord, ver.* 19, 20. It was not the firſt time *Elijah* had there wreſtled with God; if it was his lodging room, it was his praying room: and here God heard him, and wrought the miracle: what he did for *Elijah*, he can and will do for us, if he ſee fit: for *Elijah* was no more than a man, and ſubject to like paſſions as we are.

7. *Jeremiah* is a remarkable Inſtance: he was a Prophet of the Lord, ſanctified from his Mothers womb, yet he met with ſo many diſcouragements, that he hath a mind to leave his people; and he wiſheth for a lodging place in the Wilderneſs, *i. e.* ſome ſolitary retirement, that there he might take his fill of weeping; however he reſolves at preſent, that wherever he is, he will get retired, and, ſaith he, *My ſoul ſhall weep in ſecret places for your pride, Jer.* 13. 17. Yet more punctually, to the buſineſs of ſecret Prayer, ſee *Jer.* 15. 17. Saith he, *I ſate alone becauſe of thy hand.* But what did he alone? Did he only pore and muſe upon the Churches ſins and ſufferings? No, he had ſomething to ſay to his God, *ver.* 18. *Why is my pain perpetual?* And God then hath ſomething to ſay to him by way of gracious anſwer, *ver.* 19. *If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou ſhalt ſtand before me:* This is the reſult of his ſecret Prayer, a reſtauration of him to, and his conformation in, his office and function; and to the publick exerciſe thereof: This is worth praying for. *Jer.* 9. 1, 2.

8. *Daniel* is a famous pattern of the reſolute and couragious performance of this duty, againſt all oppoſition: Although he might have pleaded, (if ever any) There's a Lion in the way, I ſhall be ſlain in the Streets or Den, for my work in my Chamber: yet he feared nothing,

nothing, he ventured upon a ſevere Law, his Princes diſpleaſure, the loſs of his Preferment, the rage of his Competitors, and the Lions hungry ſtomachs, rather than he will omit or intermit his accuſtomed courſe of Chamber-worſhip; he will endure the Lyons cruelty, rather than neglect a known duty: Nay, he is ſo far from gratifying his proud adverſaries, that he will not in the leaſt abate his wonted frequency, or viſibility in the duty; *But his windows being open toward* Jerulalem, *he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed*, *Dan.* 6. 10. But did *Daniel* hold out a Flag, or blow a Trumpet, by ſetting open his windows to declare to men what he was a going to do? Was not this contrary to the rule in the Text? Are we here commanded to ſhut our door, and may *Daniel* open his window? Is not that all one? Surely that good man did not open his windows out of hypocriſie and vain-glory; but to ſhew his reſolution, courage and conſtancy, out-daring theſe impious impudent commands of men: he did not fear to be ſeen now in ſo plain a caſe. What a ſpirit are they of, that will rather give themſelves to the roaring Lion, and incur the wrath of the King of Heaven, which is more terrible than a thouſand hungry Lions, than ſolemnly perform this uſeful duty of ſecret Prayer: Let careleſs ſouls conſider this.

9. *Peter* a famous Apoſtle ſhall be another inſtance in the caſe, *Act.* 9. 40. When *Tabitha* or *Dorcas* lay dead in an upper Chamber, and the Widows ſtood weeping by her, and he was to raiſe her, *He put them all forth, and kneeled down and prayed, and turning him to the body, ſaid,* Tabitha *ariſe, and ſhe opened her eyes*—See here, another miracle like *Elijah*'s, upon ſecret Prayer: But this was upon an extraordinary caſe, did *Peter* uſe to pray alone? Yes, turn but to the next Chapter, *Act.* 10. 9. *Peter went up upon the houſe-top to pray, about the ſixth hour*: Which was about noon, another praying

ſeaſon;

Psal. 55. 17. season; certainly he missed not morning and night for such devotion: He went to the top of the flat-roost house, which was a private place, and equivalent to a Closet; there *Peter* prayed, and in that prayer he fell into a trance, and in that trance he had a Vision concerning the calling in of the *Gentiles*, a glorious mistery and transcendent mercy towards us poor Outcasts, a mystery which was kept secret since the world began, hid from ages and generations; this blessed mystery that the *Gentiles* should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel; yet this transcendent design of love was manifested to a choice Apostle while he was in the performance of this duty of secret Prayer: This is very remarkable, and worth observation.

Rom. 16. 25. Col. 1. 26, 27. Eph. 2. 4, 6.

10. The last Instance is of our blessed Saviour, our dear Lord Jesus was very conversant in this Duty: *Mark* 1. 35. *In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed:* Our precious Redeemer went about doing good, and the day time he usually spent in preaching, conferring, healing diseases, *&c.* And the night he spent in prayer, meditation, and such other holy exercises: he had scarce time to eat or sleep for doing his Father's work; he spent not one moment of time unprofitably in above thirty years: How early doth he rise, and earnestly doth he follow his business for communion with his Father, and for the work of our redemption! Yea, *Luk.* 6. 12. *He continued all night in prayer to God:* Mat. 26. 36. *i. e.* in a mountain, in secret Prayer, and frequently elsewhere we shall find him alone, and in this work: and wherefore was all this? Was it not principally for our sakes? For our salvation, and imitation? Yes certainly, he designed

our good in all; he prayed that we might pray, and reap the profit of his Prayers and purchases: Hear we *Cyprian* sweetly, He taught us to pray not in words only but deeds; himself praying frequently, and deprecating, and so demonstrating what we are to do by the witness-giving of his own example: Thus he.

Nec verbis tantum sed & factis Dominus orare nos docuit, ipse orans frequenter, & deprecans, & quid facere nos oportet exempli sui contestatione demonstrans: Cyp. *Serm. De Orat. Dom. p.* 425.

Most Divines hold the obligatory power of Scripture-examples, in things not forbidden; especially being so laudable a practice, and implyed in other Scriptures, all the former instances seem cogent Arguments; but the last concerning Jesus Christ, hath the force of a positive Precept and command.

But there is few or none that have the face of Christians, dare deny this to be a duty; but I fear many that would go for Christians live in the ordinary neglect of it.

CHAP II.

The Reasons to prove that Closet-Prayer is a Christian-Duty.

SECT. I.

The first Reason of the Point.

ALl the Reasons that I shall make use of at this time for the proof of this Doctrine, and clearing secret Prayer to be a duty, shall be fetcht out of the Text, and they are these.

1. *The*

4. Rea.
1. *The conveniency of privacy for Prayer.*
2. *The Relation betwixt God and a Saint.*
3. *Gods Omniscience, seeing in secret.*
4. *Gods Munificence, rewarding.*

1. *The great conveniency there is in privacy for Prayer,* and the good providence of God, bestowing upon us private Rooms which implicitly call us to the performance of that duty. For there is in retirement a great advantage for the managing of any work of wisdom, *Prov.* 18. 1. *Through desire a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom,* i. e. He that is really studious of true Piety, will voluntarily sequester himself to prosecute it. This was anciently the well-meaning design of a Monastick life, which since hath been wofully abused; But yet certainly there is a very great advantage in solitariness for carrying on a religious business: Take only two at present, which are advantages particularly referring to this duty of Prayer whereunto secrecy contributes.

1. *Self-expostulations, and self-abasing gestures and expressions:* when a Christian in Prayer finds his heart hard, dead, dull, distracted, or any way out of order, he may in secret make a pause, and begin to commune with his own heart, examine the matter, lament the cause, chide his untoward heart, and charge his wanton spirit to keep close to his God in duty: Thus *David, Why art thou cast down, O my Soul? Awake Psaltery and Harp, I my self will awake early: My soul wait thou upon God.* Nothing more familiar in the Psalms than such intercisions and diversions from the work in hand, to raise up the heart to an higher tune in Prayer and Praises. And this may be of singular use; for by such heart-reasonings and debates a Saint may wind up his spirit, and get better prepared for the remaining part of

of the exerciſe: Now ſuch a work as this would not be ſo ſeaſonable and convenient, when others joyn in the duty: So alſo for bodily poſtures; ſometimes for an evidence of greater humiliation, a Chriſtian finds it requiſite to proſtrate himſelf before the Lord: And uſe ſuch geſtures as would not be fit in the ſight of others; therefore Cloſet-Prayer is very neceſſary, where a Chriſtian may uſe his diſcretion as God ſhall direct him, for the humbling, quickning, raiſing and melting of his heart before the Lord alone: That's the firſt advantage.

2. *It is a wonderful help againſt diſtraction.* When we are (as it were) out of the noiſe of the world, we are then fitter for attendance upon God: The affairs, diſcourſes, troubles, and confuſions of a family (if within hearing) are a great hindrance to the duties of Meditation and Prayer: Experience teſtifies this, a Man cannot ſtudy or caſt accounts in a croud or throng of People. When we are intent upon any buſineſs, how little a noiſe diverts us? It may be this was the reaſon why that hoſpitable Gentlewoman, in 2 *King.* 4. 10. would have a Chamber built for her welcom-gueſt the Prophet *Eliſha*, yea built upon the wall: for ſhe might judge him to be a contemplative man, and though ſhe might have lodging-rooms in her houſe, yet ſhe might look upon that at a little diſtance as more commodious for his devotions and meditations, as being out of the noiſe of houſhold-buſineſs and hurryings: An active fancy quickly cloſeth with any diverſion in our attendance upon God: Therefore ought we to ſtudy to attend upon the Lord without diſtraction: When *Abraham* went to worſhip in the Mount, he left his ſervants below in the valley, leſt they ſhould obſtruct his communion with God: When *Moſes* was to go up unto the Lord, though *Aaron*, *Nadab* and *Abihu*, and the ſeventy Elders went further than the People, yet the Text ſaith, *They ſhould worſhip afar off*; but, ſaith God, *Moſes*

ſes alone ſhall come near the Lord, Exod. 24. 1, 2. Obſerveit, when *Moſes* had parted with his company, and was alone, then he ſhould come near the Lord; common profeſſors worſhip not God at all acceptably, ſincere Saints worſhipping God with others are comparatively far off; but ſouls in a corner or Cloſet, are admitted to come near God, and have ſweet intimacy with him, as I ſhall ſhew anon: Yet miſtake me not, not as though I preferred ſecret Prayer alone, before publick Prayer with others; for as God delights in the joint prayers of his People, ſo a ſoul may enjoy God in communion of Saints, and is ordinarily more carryed out to God than in private, according to the helps and advantages he hath with others; yet when the heart is in frame, there is uſually more intimacy expreſt betwixt God and the Chriſtian in ſecret, than with others: Yet further, miſtake not, not as though ſolicarineſs free'd us from all diſtractions: If we take our hearts with us, we ſhall have a principle of diverſion, and need neither noiſe nor viſible objects to hinder us from God: And this thoſe that have magnified ſolitarineſs moſt, have found by ſad experience, and left upon record: Take an Inſtance; * *Cyprian* ſpeaking

* *Locus ſecretus eligitur, quia ſolus Dei judicio jejunia ſunt agenda, & ſingularem inſpectorem, adjutoremque Deum volunt hæc habere certamina, neque in agonibus aliquibus periculoſus militatur: — Propter hoc, Solitudo carent arbitris, & Eremus; aſſentatorum ſatellitio vacua, à jejunante Chriſto eligitur, ut non cum carne & ſanguine, ſed cum ſpiritualibus nequitiis dimicetur, & amotis minorum occaſionibus homo cum Diabolo colluctetur, & ſoli ſint in palaſtra Chriſtus & Antichriſtus, Spiritus & Antiſpiritus: Neque putet homo, ſe evaſiſſe pericula cum in eremum venerit, quia quanto ſubtilius tanto difficilius à Tentatore invaditur, qui cogitationum ſoribus aſſidens omnia virtutum germina in ipſo ortu ſtrangulare molitur:* Cyp. *De Jejun. & tentat. Chriſti: Prope init.* p. 300, 301. *Verum liberius, anima expedita obviat impugnanti, ubi compedes impedimentorum deſuerint & aſpectus irritamenta non noverint: Securiorque eſt congreſſus, ubi ſingula non vellicant dimicante nec inebriant animum lenocinio voluptatum,* vid. plur.

of

of Chriſts faſting and being tempted in the Wilderneſs, chuſing that place for its ſecrecy, becauſe, ſaith he, Faſtings are to be obſerved ſo as God alone may be Judge, and in ſuch conteſts as theſe we are to call on God alone as ſpectator and helper: And ſhews notably the danger of vain-glory, and advantages of ſecrecy; yet adds, Let not a man imagine he hath eſcaped all dangers, when he comes into a Wilderneſs or ſolitary place: becauſe he is invaded by the tempter, ſo much the more difficulty, becauſe more ſubtilly, who ſitting before the doors of the thoughts, ſeeks to ſtrangle all the buds of vertue in their very birth. Yet the diſentangled ſoul will more freely reſiſt its enemy, when the fetters of impediments are wanting, and the ſight diſcerns no allurements, and the conflict is more ſecure; when particular affairs pluck not back the combatant, nor the delights of inticing pleaſures inebriate (or make drunk) the mind: Thus he: But this is the firſt Reaſon, from the advantages of ſecrecy.

SECT. II.

The ſecond Reaſon, is, from the relation betwixt God and a praying Soul.

2. ANother Reaſon held forth alſo in the Text, is drawn from that relation which is betwixt God and a believing Soul: therefore our Saviour bids, pray to *Thy Father*: and this Reaſon hath two parts.

1. The poor Soul can more freely open his heart to God in a Cloſet.

2. God will more clearly manifeſt himſelf to the Soul in ſecret.

1. A Soul in ſecret making its addreſſes to God, goes

to him as a Father: Now we know children cannot be so free in their addresses to their Father, in company and before strangers, as when no body is present: Hence it is, that when a child hath any special business to his Father, he takes him aside, or whispers to him, that none may over-hear him: And observe it, Gods children have an errand to God that none must know of: As *Ehud* said to *Eglon, I have a secret errand to thee, O King, Judg.*3.19. So a gracious soul may say, Oh my King, my God, my Father, *I have a secret errand to thee.* A lust to confess, or mercy to beg or bless thee for, that I would not have others to know of: It is not fit any should be privy to that which a gracious soul tells God of: In this case it may be said, *Discover not thy secret to another, Prov.*25.9. Two may keep counsel, but three cannot: God and a gracious soul will be faithful to each other, but a third must not know of these matters; nay in this case we may say, *Keep the doors of thy lips from her that lyeth in thy bosom, Mic.*7.5. There are many things a Saint tells God of, that he will not acquaint either Father, or Wife, or Friend with, that is as his own soul, but only his heavenly Father; he opens his bosom freely to him, and tells him his whole heart, best and worst; hides nothing from him, because he only knows the heart: And truly I have often in this admired the wisdom of God, that hath so far consulted his peoples credit and modesty as to appoint them place and ways of speaking to him privately, designing secret Prayer for this very end, that the soul may spread its letter of wants and complaints before its Father, and present its petition to the King of Heaven: The Spouse of Christ is modest (saith an Ancient) and cannot so freely let out her self to her beloved before others as in a corner: here then comes in the use and advantage of Closet-Prayer, that a Christian may (as *Jonathan* and *David* did) unbosom themselves

ſelves to each other alone) open his heart to God where no eyes ſee, or ears hear his ſecret groans and tears: But further,

2. God will more familiarly communicate himſelf to the ſoul in a corner; he alſo hath ſomething to whiſper in the believers ear, that none muſt know of; and therefore gets it by it ſelf: a lively emblem whereof we have in *Joſephs making himſelf known to his Brethren*, when his bowels were working, *and he could not refrain himſelf, he cryed, cauſe every man to go out from me.—Then he wept aloud, and ſaid, I am Joſeph.* And, oh what endeared reciprocal affections did work in all their breaſts towards each other! Juſt thus, is it betwixt our *Joſeph* and his brethren, Jeſus Chriſt and his members; there ſtands none with him while Jeſus makes himſelf known unto his Brethren: and though at firſt they be (as it were) troubled at his preſence, yet when he ſpeaks lovingly, and paſſeth by former unkindneſſes, and ſaith, Come near unto me I pray you, then they come near, and he ſaith convincingly, *I am Jeſus whom ye ſold and crucified*: This melts and humbles their rocky hearts, and being broken, he pours oyl into their troubled ſpirits, and ſpeaks many ſweet heart-reviving words unto them: Then, then the child of God hath moſt ſweet refreſhing incomes: When God hath allured the ſoul into the Wilderneſs, he ſpeaks to its heart. A Wilderneſs is a ſolitary place, where other ſpeech is not heard, (as the word imports:) then ſpeaks God to the ſoul when men cannot ſpeak to it: When men are remote, God is near at hand; yea neareſt to help, melt, comfort, quicken, when men are furtheſt off: Our Saviour ſaith of himſelf, *Joh.* 16. 32. *You leave me alone, yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.* q. d. When you go away,

Gen. 45. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Hoſ. 2. 14.

מדבר
Deſertum, ſic dictum per Antiphr. quaſi locus à ſermone remotus.

away, my Father comes to visit me with most familiar endearings, Oh blessed exchange! Thus it is often with the Saints: when men leave them, or they withdraw from men, they have many times most of God: and, Is it not infinitely better, to have the presence of God, than the company of men? 'Tis worth noting what God saith of *Abraham*, *Isa.* 51. 2. *I called him alone and blessed him.* Mark it, when God had inticed *Abraham* from all his friends, and got him alone, then he blesseth him, and you know what the blessing of *Abrham* was, even a Covenant-blessing; such God distributes to his Saints when he hath withdrawn them from company into a corner: This is that which made an Ancient profes, that a Town was his Prison, a solitary place his Paradise: Cities or numerous societies draw a veil betwixt God and the soul, which solitariness withdraws; and so many times becomes most sweet: we often lose God in a croud of business or company, but find him when alone: Hence a corner of our house may be a little corner of Heaven, and in our closets we may find the sweetest cordials and contentment: You know, Friends do most familiarly injoy one another when others are not present. *Jonathan* sent away the lad when he would be familiar with his friend *David*: And then they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until *David* exceeded: Even so, husband and wife alone have the sweetest embraces: There lyes a restraint (as it were) upon God by company, which is taken off in a sort by solitariness. Oh when God finds a soul alone by it self, having set it self purposely to meet him, then he reveals his love, unvails his face, unlocks his blessed chest, distributes doles of love and grace, kisses it with the kisses of his mouth, and sends it not away empty, but full of grace and peace. Thus that

Mihi oppidum carcer est, solitudo paradisus. Hieronym.

1 *Sam.* 20. 40, 41.

word

word of *Solomon* is verified, *Prov.* 14. 10. *The heart knoweth his own bitterneſs, and a ſtranger intermeddles not with his joy, i. e.* No creature on earth is privy to the ſecret groans or ſweeteſt ſolace of a retired Saint: That's the ſecond Reaſon.

SECT. III.

The third Reaſon is drawn, from God ſeeing in ſecret.

ANother Reaſon is drawn from Gods Omniſcience and Omnipreſence, the Text ſaith, *Thy Father ſees in ſecret*: And the ſtrength and force of this argument lyes in theſe four particulars.

1. *God ſees in ſecret*, therefore he takes notice whether you pray in ſecret yea or no: He looks after thee (as it were) when thou goeſt into ſuch a chamber and ſolitary place, and ſaith, That ſoul hath now an opportunity, a convenient place and fit occaſion, to wait upon me, and will he not? Will he be always ſo buſie in other company, that I muſt have none of his fellowſhip? Muſt his converſe be ſo much with men, that he can ſpare no time for communion with God: Nay, will he go ſo often into ſuch a room to do ſuch and ſuch a buſineſs, and can he never find a time to go down upon his knees, and viſit me? hath he ſo much to do in the world, that he hath no leiſure to look up to Heaven? Do his worldly occaſions ſtill thruſt out ſpiritual meditations? will he never ſet himſelf ſolemnly to tranſact betwixt my ſelf and him in Prayer and Meditation, the moſt important buſineſs of his ſoul? Ah ſirs, the Omnipreſent God takes notice of all your motions into and out of your chambers, and expects that ſometimes at leaſt your ſouls ſhould wait upon him: And why ſhould Chriſtians fruſtrate his expectation?

2. *God sees in secret*, Therefore he hath seen thy secret sins, and sins in secret: Thy close and closet wickedness is naked and open before the piercing eyes of an all-seeing God; Therefore should thy Closet-tears and Prayers testifie thy sound and saving repentance. For this is a rule in practical divinity, that sorrow for sin must bear some propotion to the nature and circumstances of the sin, both as to degree, and circumstances of time and place. *Manasseh* humbled himself greatly for his great abominations. So for place and manner, them that sin openly must be rebuked before all, and testifie their repentance before the Church. So, if the sin be private or less known, the rule in *Mat.* 18. 15, 16. is to be observed for private admonition and confession: And consequently secret sins must be secretly mourned for. When thy sins are known to none but to God and thine own conscience, thou art not bound to discover them to any other but to God, in an hearty secret repentance, except in some few cases. Here then comes in secret prayer and godly sorrow: Well then, there's none of us without our secret sins, and God sees them all though never so privily committed; we may hide sin from men, we cannot hide it from the Lord: he sets our secret sins in the light of his countenance, *Psal.* 90. 8. His eyes are open upon all the wayes of man, and who knows all the errors of his life? Therefore must we get alone and enumerate all the sins we know of, and desire God to shew us what we do not know, and with holy *David*, breath out that devout Petition, *Psal.* 19. 12. *Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

1 *Tim.* 5. 10.

Job. 34. 21, 22.
Jer. 32. 19.
Pro. 5. 10.

4. *God sees in secret*, Therefore thou dost not lose thy labour, though men know not where thou art, or what thou art a doing, yet thy God takes notice of thee: thou dost not thy good works *incognito*; though thy groans

are

are not seen or heard by men, yet they are well known to thy God, *Psal.* 38. 9. *Lord, all my desire is before thee: and my groaning is not hid from thee.* As if *David* should say, Lord, I many times withdraw my self into a Closet or retired place, and there I open before the Lord the sorrows of my soul, *I pour out my heart like water before the face of the Lord, Lam.* 2. 19. Sometimes in the night-watches, or in solitary places, none knows what I am doing; no eye sees, no ear hears, my briny tears or bitter out-cryes; but the all-seeing God hides not his eyes from my tears, stops not his ears to my cryes, but knows my groans, yea my very desires: Observe it, There is not a Believing Prayer but it is upon the file, and on record in Heaven, though offered up by an obscure person & in an obscure place; yea God knoweth the meaning of his Spirit in the hearts of his people, Rom. 8. 17. though the troubled Saint cannot tell whether it be indeed the Spirit of God or no: But this know, that secret prayers in a chamber are as well known to God, as open prayers in a publick Church; heart-ejaculations are owned by God as well as loudest acclamations. God took notice of *Hezekiah* when he turned his face toward the wall, and wept, and prayed, and saith God; *I have heard thy Prayer, I have seen thy Tears, Isa.* 38. 5. Though men did not much take notice, God did: yea more, he expresseth his approbation and acceptation of these sacrifices in secret. But of that, anon.

4. *God sees in secret*, Therefore Closet-Prayer is a solemn acknowledment of Gods omniscience and omnipresence: when you pray in a corner you testifie your faith in Gods ubiquity, and look upon him as filling Heaven and Earth; and this God commands us to believe, yea would have us to lye under the sense hereof. Hence that vehement expostulation, *Jer.* 23. 24. *Can*

any

any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill Heaven and Earth, saith the Lord? Yes, saith the believing soul, I know thou art every where; no thought can be with-holden from thee, therefore I wait on thee here: all's one where I am, for wherever I am I cannot run away from thee; and wherever I am, I may approach unto thee: And the Lord is nigh to broken hearts, and praying souls; He is not far from every one of us, but his special presence is with his Saints in duty. *David* composeth a Psalm of Gods Immensity, *Psal.* 139. Wherein he shews, 1. Gods omniscience, in the six first *verses*, *Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising*, &c. 2. Gods omnipresence, *ver.* 7. to *ver.* 14. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? If to Heaven, thou art there*, &c. Darkness and light are both alike to thee: And what use doth holy *David* make of this Heavenly doctrine? surely, if God will be with him wherever he is, he is resolved to be with God, *v.* 18. *When I awake I am still with thee*, *i. e.* by secret prayer and meditation: when I lye down I commend my soul and body to thee, and when I rise up I meditate of thee; when I go to sleep I pray, when I awake I am with God by holy and precious thoughts. So that I am still with God, all my dayes, in all places, conditions, relations, companies, I am still with my God, and as a good man used to say, *My God and I are good company:* This, this is to be thorow-paced in Religion; this is *Enochs* walking with God, a conversation in Heaven, a Fellowship with the Father, an emblem of glory, and the sweetest, happiest life a soul is capable of in this world; and much of this consists in a conversing with God in the duty of secret Prayer: And all this flows from a due apprehension of Gods omniscience and omnipresence, and this

Psal. 34. 15, 17, 18.

this reason *Cyprian* renders, why Jesus Christ here doth prescribe our Closet-devotions, as most agreeable to our Christian Faith, that we may know God is every where present, hears all, and pierceth with the fulness of his Majesty into the inmost rooms, and hidden places, according to the Scriptures: And truly, this is a Doctrine worth confirming by such a practice; and this is a practice worthy of such a Doctrine: That's the third Reason.

Denique magisterio suo Dominus secretè nos orare precepit in abditis & secretis vel semotis locis, in cubiculis ipsis, quod magis convenit fidei, ut sciamus Deum ubique esse præsentem, audire omnes, & videre, & majestatis suæ plenitudine in abdita quoque & occulta penetrare, sicut Scriptum est, Jer. 23. 23, 24. & Prov. 15. 3. Cypr. *Serm. de orat. Dom.* p. 409.

SECT. IV.

The last Reason is drawn from Gods rewarding openly.

4. LAstly, The Text saith, *Thy Father that seeth in secret will reward thee openly*: This Reason is drawn from Gods munificence. Wherein we have, 1. The promise, that's a reward: 2. The manner of performance, openly: This is a comfortable Circumstance, 'tis worth something to know that our labour is not lost, it shall be rewarded, yea it shall be rewarded by God, whose rewards are great like himself, yea it shall be rewarded by thy Father. A Father takes in good part a little service of an obedient child, and gives a great reward for a little work; yea Closet-Prayer shall be openly rewarded. The observableness of the mercy inhanceth the rates of it; tending more to the Christians comfort, example to others, incouragement to right worshippers, and glory to God: All these things might take up much time, but I shall onely hint

hint what is that open reward that God gives to such as are constant in Closet-Prayer: That's these four wayes.

1. By returning a visible answer to secret Prayer: None saw *Jacobs* wrestling hand to fist (as it were) with the Angel; but all might observe the loving embraces betwixt that good man and his hostile brother *Esau*: There was no witness of *Moses*'s intercession for *Israel* in the Mount; but all the congregation and the whole world, may bear witness of Gods hearing his Prayer, for sparing an offending people: When *Eli* observed *Hanna*'s lips move, and heard no voice, he misjudged her to be a drunken woman: but the truth is, she was busie with her God in earnest Prayer; and though he knew nothing of it then, yet afterwards he saw the effect, 1 *Sam.* 1. 13. with *ver.* 27. *For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him:* (*Ecce signum*) behold a sign of his favour; behold an evident token that I prayed in truth! Many a time, yea many a time was I provoked by my scoffing adversary *Peninnah*, and as often did I make my moan to my Heavenly Husband; and see here the fruit of my sincere devotions in a corner: None saw my Tears, all may see my Child; none heard my cryes in Prayer, but the voice of my *Samuel* may be heard by all *Israel*: He shall carry the memorial of answer to secret Prayer in his name to the grave: And cannot many a soul speak the same language? Cannot you seal to the same or like experiment? Cannot some of Gods children say, This mercy I got from God in such a Room, Chamber, or Closet? No creature upon earth knew what I did there. But now all may see the happy effects of my hard travel, I find that 'tis not in vain to seek God in private; none knows the meaning of the mercy but my self. I

Gen. 32. 24. *with* Chap. 33. 4.

Exod. 32. 10. 11. 14.

may

may call it *Naphthali*, for with great wreſtlings have I wreſtled with my God and prevailed. This mercy bears a double price to all the reſt, for 'tis won by Prayer, and now may be worn with praiſes and triumphing; ſo that a ſoul may ſay, This is my God, I have waited for him, he will ſave me, this is [my God] *Jehovah*, I have waited for him, I will be glad and rejoyce in his ſalvation: Lo here he is, I can now make my boaſt of my God. Wicked men are wont to ſay, Where is thy God? Now I can anſwer them, Lo this is he that returns ſuch anſwers to my Prayer, that appears ſo glorioufly for me, This is my God in whom I have truſted, on whom I have called, and he hath anſwered, I am not diſappointed: Bleſſed be God, theſe appearances are the viſible returns of my ſecret prayers. Gen. 38. 8. Iſa. 25. 9.

2. God rewards ſecret prayer openly, by diſcriminating Providences in a common calamity: God uſually takes them into the chambers of his protection that retired themſelves into chambers of devotion: They that enjoy moſt of God, ſhall be beſt ſecured by God: *Pſal.* 91. 1. *He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the moſt High, ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty; i. e.* He that by faith and prayer hath got moſt intimate communion with God, is lodged in the ſafeſt ſhelter in the day of danger: And who is ſo likely to enjoy God as that Chriſtian that waits much upon God in ſecret; he gets into Gods ſecret place, who is much with God in ſeccet places: *David* put up many a hearty prayer in ſolitary caves; and how remarkably doth God ſecure him in the day of apparent hazard, to the conviction of *Saul* and his Courtiers? We find the mourners in *Sion* lamenting ſecretly the abominations committed openly, Iſa. 26. 20.

and

and God ſets an obvious character upon their foreheads, ſeen diſcernably by the deſtroying Angel, and known apparently by the effects thereof to the world in their exemption from the general ſtroak of deſolation, *Ezek.* 9. 4, 6. *Jeremiahs* ſoul weeps in ſecret for the pride and prophaneſs of *Iſrael*; and he was ſtrangely ſecured in the day of *Iſraels* dreadful deſtruction: 'Tis very remarkable, what's recorded in *Gen.* 19. 29. *God remembred* Abraham; *and ſent* Lot *out of the midſt of the overthrow*: Why, what did *Abraham*? The former Chapter tells us, that *Abraham* had been with God in Prayer in ſecret, and this was the effect of it, God will ſnatch *Lot* out of that dreadful burning as a return of ſecret Prayer: God takes a time to put a difference betwixt his praying people and others: Faith and Prayer are two feet of the ſoul, whereby the righteous run into the Name of the Lord which is their ſtrong Tower and are ſafe: A ſoul hid with God, cannot be hurt by men: If any be ſecured in a day of danger, 'tis thoſe that are moſt with God in a corner: *Floods of great Waters, ſhall not come nigh to praying Saints.* Pſal. 32. 6. Hence ſaith *David*, ver. 7. *Thou art my hiding place, thou ſhalt preſerve me from trouble*: Some way or other God will atteſt and teſtifie the integrity of his praying ſervants before the world: Thus he dealt in the caſe of *Job*: God's Children may be long concealed from the view of men, both as to their perſons and actions; but in God's good time he brings them out with honour, as he did with *Elijah*: Sometimes God gives clear demonſtrations of his tender affection to his deſpiſed Saints in the view of the World: *Rev.* 3. 9.—*I will make them to come, and worſhip before thy feet, and to know that I have loved*

Jer. 13. 17. with Chap. 39. 11.

Prov. 18. 10.

See Pſal. 31. 19, 20. & 91. 15.

loved thee: This is not a religious adoration, but a civil reverence due to real Saints as an evidence of repentance, or ſpecial reſpect; as dogs fawn upon their Maſters, laying themſelves at their feet: As the word imports. Natural conſcience ſometimes doth homage to the image of God in the Saints: However, this is a well-known truth, that as God hath brought forth wicked mens ſecret works of darkneſs, into open light, to their confuſion in this world: So he hath clearly diſcovered his Saints upright ſervices in ſecret corners, to their honour and ſafety in the nick of time: *Jaddus* hearing of *Alexanders* approach to *Jeruſalem*, ſet himſelf to pray; then put on his prieſtly garments and met the Conqueror, who fell down on his face before him. *Parmenio* askt him, why he adored the *Jews* High-Prieſt, when as other men adored him; *Alexander* anſwered, I do not adore him, but that God whom the High-Prieſt worſhippeth; for in my ſleep I ſaw him in ſuch an habit, when I was in *Macedonia*:—But examples of this nature are frequent every where, what ſtrange effects prayer hath brought forth, both for defence to the Saints, and offence to their Enemies; ſo that the clear evidence hereof hath wreſted from many ſtout oppoſers, that acknowledgment of the Queen of *Scots*, that ſhe feared more the prayers of *John Knox*, than an Army of ten thouſand fighting men: But this is the ſecond branch of this laſt reaſon. God openly rewards by manifeſt deliverances in time of danger.

Προσκυνεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς κυνὸς
Seſe ad pedes alicujus ſubjectionis cauſæ provolvere; qualiter catelli heris ſuis adblandiuntur.

See *Clarks* general Martyrol. *Fol.* 5.

SECT.

SECT. V.

The third way of rewarding ſecret Prayer, is, Increaſe of Grace.

3. GOd rewards ſecret Prayer openly by conferring upon ſecret wreſtlers more eminent gifts and graces of his Spirit, and ſuch as ſhall be taken notice of by others: They that are moſt conſtant in ſecret prayer, ſhall be moſt eminent in open Prayer: Such as with *Moſes* converſe with God in the Mount, ſhall have ſhining faces: The beauty of the Lord ſhall be upon them: When a ſoul hath been with its God in a corner, the effects are ſo remarkable, that others ſhall take knowledge of him that hath been with Jeſus: And it muſt needs be ſo, for, converſing with God is of a transforming nature, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. *But we all with open face beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord:* God's appointments are as glaſſes through which we may ſee the face of God. Now there are two ſorts of glaſſes, broader and narrower; the broader glaſſes are publick Ordinances, and the narrower glaſſes are theſe private Duties: In both theſe a ſoul may ſeek and ſee the face of God, and ſo become like him; for, ſeeing here is aſſimilating; as the Viſion of God hereafter is glorifying: Oh 'tis a beautifying and beatifical ſight to ſee God! Fulneſs of grace is the beſt thing in glory; peace and joy are but (as it were) the gloſs and varniſh of this fulneſs of grace: Now the more a ſoul enjoys God, the more God-like and Heaven-like he is, for his graces ſhine brighter, and he is ſtill mounting higher: And private or ſecret duties are notable wayes of communion with God: yea ſometimes a ſoul may miſs of Chriſt in publick Ordinances, and

and find him in secret; so some interpret that place in *Cant.* 3. 24. The Soul had sought her beloved in the bed of Temple-worship and publick Ordinances: In the streets and broad wayes of Synagogues and communion of Saints, still she found not her beloved; then she seeks him in conferences and occasional meeting with the watchmen, but she can yet hear no tydings of Jesus Christ, but, saith she, *It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth.* Observe it, this was not when she was past all means in a way of neglect of, or being above Ordinances; for she was seeking him still, which implyes the use of means, only she had past the publick without finding, and now she is in the use of private helps, the after-duties of Meditation, Self-examination, secret Prayer, and therein the soul finds God; not that this reflects disparagement on the publick Ordinances, but to shew that God is a free Agent, and to be an ingagement and incouragement to us in the use of all Gods appointments: And when the soul thus finds God in a corner, it carries away something of God that casts a sweet perfume upon his person and acting, that is taken notice of by others; It may be said of such a soul as *Isaac* spoke of his son *Jacob*, Gen. 27. 27. *See, the smell of my Son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.* So when a serious Christian comes down from his Closet where he hath met with his God, oh what a sweet perfume of well-scented graces doth he cast forth? The favour of Religion is upon him, some breathing odours of holiness break from his lips, hands, and feet; the power of Godliness doth manifest it self in his expressions, actions, conversation: Where hath such an one been? Surely he hath been conversing with God; there is the lively image and inscription of God upon him, and while that blessed frame continues, he is not like himself;

See Mr. *Cotton* in loc.

ſelf; as he excels carnal men at all times, ſo now he excels himſelf: Yea obſerve it, A ſoul converſing much with God in the duties of Meditation and ſecret Prayer grows taller by head and ſhoulders than other ordinary Chriſtians: As all godly men are more excellent than their neighbours, ſo a ſoul that waits much on God in ſecret Prayer, is more excellent than moſt of his Godly neighbours; and it appears ſo at preſent by his gifts in Praying, and may appear in his ſupport and comfort in the day of ſuffering: Oh what a mighty man in Closet-Prayer was magnanimous *Luther?* And what noble atchievements did he go through? *William Gardiner* Martyr in *Portugal* ſought out ſolitary places for prayer before he attempted that ſtrange act of publick oppoſition to Idolatry, in taking the hoſt out of the Cardinals hand, trampling it under his feet, and with the other hand overthrew the chalice: Which act though it may ſeem ſcarce warrantable in an ordinary way; yet ſhewed an heroical ſpirit for the main, obtained by a conſcientious attendance upon God in the duty of ſecret Prayer: Take one inſtance more, it is Mr. *George Wiſchard* [or *Wiſeheart*] one of the holieſt men and choiceſt Reformers that *Scotland* ever had. One night he gate up and went into a yard, there he walked in an Alley for ſome ſpace, breathing forth many ſobs and deep groans, then he fell upon his knees, and his groans increaſed; then he fell upon his face. Two men watcht him, and heard him weeping and praying, near an hour, ſo went to bed again: As this Saint was much with God, ſo the Lord was much with him in preaching, propheſying, acting bravely, and ſuffering death chearfully. Surely the Spirit of God and of glory reſted upon this man of God, if ever upon any, the adverſaries themſelves being Judges: This is a great truth, they have been moſt emi-

Clarks general Martyr. c. 29. *fol.* 243.

Ibid. fol. 318.

eminent, that have been most with God in secret Prayer: let Scripture and History speak, time and room would fail me to enumerate. Who more famous for piety and learning of late years, than the great *Usher?* It was his usual practice to sequester himself into some privacy, and to spend it in strict examination, penitential humiliation, and ardent supplication, and this he found sweet to his soul; and others saw the effect.

Dr. *Bernard*, the life and death of Dr. *Usher*, p. 27.

SECT. VI.

The last reward of secret Prayer is at the great Day.

4. THe last and chiefest reward that our heavenly Father will bestow on those that have waited on God in secret Prayer, will be the open acknowledgment and acceptance of them at that solemn day of Judgment, when the whole World shall be summoned before the Lord, *And every one shall receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad*, 2 *Cor.* 5. 10. Then our blessed Saviour, who shall be Judge, will single out this seed of *Jacob*, and tell them they have not sought his face in vain; he will now solemnly acknowledge them before his Father and all the holy Angels, as persons with whom he hath had familiar acquaintance in a corner: Oh the joy and triumph in such a publick acknowledgment: When our dear Redeemer shall speak such a language as this before those myriads of creatures! This or that soul (calling it forth with honour) though not taken notice of in the World for Religion, much less for worldly Greatness, hath yet had intimate familiarity with my self, and I with him; he hath performed many a solemn duty which none but an omniscient eye hath seen: though he hath

lived obscurely in the World, and hath been little known to eminent Preachers or Professors; yet he and I have been long and well acquainted. I have had his company many times in a corner, and now I cannot but remember the kindness of his youth and old age, the love of his espousals when he went after me in solitary places, rather than want my presence: He hath visited me in duty, and I have visited him in mercy: Oh what mutual embraces, and reciprocal exchanges of love have there been betwixt us! He hath owned me, and I have owned him in the day of adversity: Whenever he had any doubt or want, or fear, or affliction, I heard from him in a Closet; he sent his winged messenger of a believing Prayer to the throne of grace, and I took it well from him. I did not despise his person, or deny his suit; when others have been sporting away time in vain recreations, or damning their souls in prophane practices, this ransomed Believer when he could steal a little time, run into a corner, and there did make his moan to me; and then I gave him something worth his pains, I sent him away with a chearful heart and thankful tongue: And now take notice all ye Angels and Men, I declare that I accept this Soul's labour of love, and pardon all its imperfections, and set him in my immediate presence in eternal mansions: He that separated himself from the world, shall now be separated from the goats, and be set on my right hand; he that longed so much to enjoy me, shall everlastingly enjoy me, without cessation, or interruption: Oh blessed day! Oh transcendent reward! Is not this a rewarding openly? You'l say, How do you know that Jesus Christ will thus bespeak a praying Soul; I reply, though we know not the form of words he will speak, yet that a discovery shall be made of the acts of piety and charity, *Mat.* 25. evidently declares. Yea, that secret duties shall be brought to light as well as secret

cret ſins, the Scriptures declare, 1 *Cor.*4.5. — *Who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the counſels of the hearts, and then ſhall every man have praiſe of God*: Then good men ſhall receive open approbation and commendation for their holy exerciſes in ſecret places: Then will God wipe off all reproaching calumnies of black-mouthed lyars, wherewith they have beſpattered the reputation of praying Saints; and clear up their uprightneſs as the noon-day, by letting the world ſee, how the Saints ſpent their time in corners, both alone, and with their fellow-Chriſtians, not in plotting but in praying; yea pleading for thoſe that perſecuted them. Oh bleſſed day! Oh happy Reſurrection of bodies and of names. Surely then praying ſouls will not then repent themſelves of all their pains in private, when they poured out their hearts in prayers and tears, ſince now they are rewarded with ſuch a bleſſed *Euge*, and are openly entertained into their Maſters joy and Father's Kingdom.

CHAP. III.

The firſt Uſe, of Information.

SECT. I.

Concerning Places of Prayer.

1. IF Cloſet-Prayer be a Chriſtian Duty, then it ſhews us, that in Goſpel-times God ſtands not preciſely upon places: this holy Incenſe may aſcend to Heaven with as much acceptance upon the golden Altar (the merits and mediation of Jeſus Chriſt) as well in a private Chamber as a publick Church. Some have ſcornfully called private devotions, by the derogating title of

Chimney-Prayers; and think to confine all Religion to publick places: yea a great Scholar said once, God heard Prayer in a consecrated place [*Non quia precatur, sed quia ibi*] not because men pray, but because they pray there, as though the conceited holiness of the place added some vertue to the Prayer, or rendred it more acceptable to God. This is worse than plain *Judaism*, to tye Religion to places: The true Gospelized Christian hath otherwise learned Christ. 'Tis true, in the Old Testament dispensation, after the erecting of the Temple, Prayer was to be made at it, or towards it, as it typified Christ, by whom our prayers are accepted: But that holiness being ceremonial, 'tis now abolished by the Gospel: Now that takes place, in *Joh.* 4. 21. *Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this Mountain, nor at Jerusalem, worship the Father, i. e.* God now doth not so much stand upon the place, as the manner of worship, *that they worship in spirit and in truth, ver.* 23. 24. Now is the prophecy accomplished, *Mal.* 1. 11. *In every place, Incense shall be offered to my Name.* Which the Apostle also asserts expressly, 1 *Tim.* 2. 8. Much hath been said in controversie concerning the holiness of places; but this seems to be an undeniable argument against that Conceit, that if some places be holy by the Churches consecration of them to holy uses, then it followeth that other places not so consecrated, howbeit applyed to the same holy use, are more prophane, and less apt to divine worship than places consecrated: which would directly contradict the Scriptures last mentioned. Indeed *Hooker* teacheth that the service of God in places not sanctified, as Churches are, hath not in it self such perfection of grace, and comeliness, as when the dignity of the place (which it wisheth for) doth concur, and that

Judaismus est, alligare religionem ad certa loca. Hospin. *de orig. Temp. lib.* 4. *c.* 2.

Eccles. polit. lib. 5. *c.* 16.

that the very Majeſty and holineſs of the place where God is worſhipped, bettereth even our holieſt and beſt actions: Thus he. To whom we dare not ſubſcribe; but rather ſay with Dr. *John Reinolds*, that to us Chriſtians no Land is ſtrange, no ground unholy: Every coaſt is *Jewry*, every town *Jeruſalem*, and every houſe, *Zion*; and every faithful company, yea every faithful body, a Temple to ſerve God in.

Confer. with Hart. *c.* 8. Divis 4. *pag.* 491.

But I ſhall not undertake a diſpute upon this ſubject: The duty of the Text clears it, If God command and accept Cloſet-Prayer then he doth not make ſo great a matter of the place for this duty as ſome imagine, ſince it cannot be imagined that Cloſet-Prayer can be performed ordinarily in a conſecrated place (as they call it;) and there being no ſuch place where a duty can be performed, to which God hath more expreſly promiſed a reward, than what is performed in a Corner or Cloſet; and therefore we have no warrant to expect acceptance meerly upon the account of one place more than another.

SECT. II.

The Nature of Prayer.

2. WE may hence be informed concerning the nature, uſefulneſs, excellency, and efficacy of the duty of Prayer: I ſpeak not now of Prayer in general, but in reference to Cloſet-Prayer. And on that account there are two Conſectaries hence, concerning Prayer.

1. It follows, that Prayer is an immediate worſhip of God: For what hath been ſaid, ſhews that we have to do immediately with God, yea that a man alone ſingly hath

hath to do with God: therein it's different from other parts of Gods instituted worship, which doth necessarily require company; as in preaching of the Word, there must be hearers; in the seals of the Covenant, as in Baptism and the Lords-Supper, there must be a society, such a number as may be called a Church: Hence the latter is called a Communion, because saith the Apostle, *We being many are one bread, and one body*: But it is not absolutely or essentially requisite to Prayer, that there be a society; one man or woman, by him or her self alone, may perform this duty of Prayer as acceptably to God, as if in the company of a thousand Saints: We deny not the publick or private Meetings of Gods people for Prayer; but with al affirm, that the nature of the duty is such, that it may be performed solitary and alone: Hence Schoolmen distinguish of Prayer, that it is either [*Communis* or *Singularis*] Common or Singular: Both have their place and use: Though they lay great stress upon Christs promise, in *Mat.* 18. 20. promising to be where two or three are met in his Name; which as we deny not, so we assert the force of this Prayer of a single person according to the Text: We give both their due, without comparisons.

1 Cor. 10. 16, 17.

Aq. 2, 2æ. *q.* 83. *Art.* 12.

2. Prayer cannot be stopt in its ascent to God: All the persecutors on earth, cannot hinder a soul's Praying. This is demonstrated two wayes. 1. A Child of God banisht out of all human society may pray still. Suppose a man were rejected by men, and ejected out of all companies of men, and were shut up in the Closest Prison, or shut out in the remotest Wilderness; suppose a man were in the Caves and Dens of the Earth; yet still he might pray and be heard, according to *Solomon*'s Prayer, that, If Gods People were carried captive into the Land of their Enemies, far or near, yet if they repented

pented and prayed unto God towards their Land, and that Houſe of God; then he begs that God would hear them: and God teſtifies that he did hear this Prayer of *Solomon*, 1 *King* 8. 46, 48. with *chap.* 9. 3. The paſſage to Heaven is as near and open from one part of the earth as another: therefore *David* ſaith, he will *cry to God from the end of the Earth*, Pſal. 61. 2. A notable inſtance for this we have in *Jonah*: he was got into the bottom of the Sea (as far from Heaven locally as one could imagine) into a great Fiſhes belly, which he calls the very belly of Hell; and as he was then far from men, ſo he looks upon himſelf as caſt out of the ſight of God, and he pathetically expreſſeth his miſery and hopeleſs ſtate. What doth he in this doleful plight? Why he will look towards Gods holy Temple! Alas, poor *Jonah* knew not now which way the Temple ſtood, he had but a ſhort Proſpect in that dark and narrow Priſon; yes, faith can ſet *Jonah* upon one of the Mountains of *Iſrael*, that thence he may ſee as far as Mount *Zion*, and reach as high as Heaven; he prayes, yea cryes; God hears, and delivers: as low as he was he knocks at Heaven gates, and his Prayer doth pierce the Clouds, it makes bold, and ſteps in, *My prayer*, ſaith he, *came in unto thee, into thine holy Temple*, Jonah 2. 2, 7. Oh the ſtrange and ſwift motion of a believing Prayer! Let the praying ſoul be where it will, the Prayer will come to God's ear, and get an anſwer.

2. A Child of God that cannot ſpeak a word, may put up an acceptable Prayer: ſuppoſe the tongue which is the organ of ſpeech, were cut out, yet a Saint cannot thereby be obſtructed in his acceſs to God by Prayer. For, as *Ameſius* ſaith [*Oratio formaliter eſt actus voluntatis*,] Prayer is formally the act of the Will; deſire is the ſoul of Prayer, which God may hear, though it be not expreſſed, for he knows the heart, *Pſal.* 10. 17. *Lord thou haſt heard the deſire of the humble*: A Saints deſire

is

is a real Prayer; if the desire be right, words are but the outward garb, habit, or cloaths (as I may so say) of Prayer, the carcass or shell of the duty, ardent desires are the life, kernel, marrow of the performance: Hence we find that *Moses*, *Hannah*, and *Nehemiah*, are said to pray, when Scripture doth not express a word they speak, nor is it probable they did make an articulate sound: I speak not this to indulge carnal men in their lazy conceited ejaculations, as though they could pray well enough, and never speak; or while they are working, walking, talking: Let me hint a word by the way to these. Consider, silly soul, God hath given thee a body, and thou must offer it to God as a reasonable sacrifice; thou art bound in conscience to pray and praise God with thy tongue, which is thy glory; yea let me tell thee, if thou hast those members of body, and an opportunity to pray thus solemnly with thy tongue upon thy knees, and dost never do it, I question whether thou prayest at all or no, since thou livest in the apparent neglect of a known duty: What I speak of the Saints real (though sometimes without vocal) Prayers is to commend the duty, and comfort those Saints that may be put to these exigencies, that though they cannot speak, yet they may pray, and be heard and answered.

Exod. 14, 15. 1 Sam. 1. 13. Neh. 2. 4.

Deus exaudit non solùm preces indicativas sed & optativas, Luth.

SECT. III.

Shewing the Power of Prayer.

I Might from hence take occasion to discover the strength and efficacy of this duty of Prayer, from the consideration of Closet-Prayer: though but a poor single

ſingle perſon get upon his knees in a Corner, and have no creature to help him, yet he can even undertake to grapple with the omnipotent and eternal God, yea by his ſtrength may have power with God, as we heard of *Jacob*; who by ſingle wraſtling with him (hand to fiſt as it were) wreſtled a bleſſing from him: One poor ſingle *Elijah* could ſtand againſt at leaſt four hundred Prophets of *Baal*, and prevail, having recourſe to the living God by Prayer; yea the Apoſtle tells us, that this *Elijah*, though but a mortal man, yet he ſhut up and opened Heaven, that it rained, and rained not, according to his Prayer; hence he infers an univerſal Maxim, that the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous man avails much; and illuſtrates it by that notable inſtance, *James* 5. 16, 17, 18. But ſome may object, *Elijah* was a great Prophet, an extraordinary perſon; he might prevail when we cannot: he anſwers, He was no more than a man, *a Man ſubject to like paſſions as we are*, a ſinful creature; he prevailed not for any merits of his own, but through faith in the Mediator of the Covenant, and ſo may we. There's not the meaneſt Child of God but hath the ſame plea: God hath ſtrength enough to give, faith one; but he hath no ſtrength to deny. Here the Almighty himſelf (with reverence be it ſpoken) is weak: even a child, the weakeſt in grace of his family, that can but ſay, Father, is able to overcome him, for Prayer is in a ſort omnipotent; it can conquer the invincible *Jehovah*, and bind the hands (as it were) of an omnipotent God, ſo that God is fain to cry out to wreſtling *Moſes*, Let me alone: 'Tis ſaid of *Luther*; That man could do with God even what he would. Prayer hath a kind of commanding compulſive power: That's a ſtrange Text, *Iſa.* 45. 11.—*Ask me of things*

1 King 18. 36.

Mr. *Gurnal* on *Eph.* 6. 10. *p.* 42.

Vincit invincibilem, ligat omnipotentem.

to

to come concerning my Sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me: So some take it; ye shall find me as ready to do you service, as if ye had me at command: yet this must be warily received, not as though God were forced to any thing against his will, but when Gods people pray aright in the name of Christ according to his will, he heareth them; and this he attributes to Prayer, for the credit of that duty and incouragement of praying souls: That's a notable Text to shew the readiness of God to answer Prayer, *Joh.* 16. 26, 27.—*I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you.*——Christ in this place doth not simply deny, that he will intercede for them; but shews how ready God is of his own accord to grant the Saints petitions; They shall not be put to any great trouble about it, but shall be quickly dispacht in their errand to the Throne of Grace: For as * *Luther* speaks, a Poor groan in the ears of God is a mighty noise, and doth so fill Heaven and earth, that God can hear nothing besides it, and silenceth all other tumults to hearken to it.

1 Joh. 5. 14.

* *Exiguus gemitus in auribus Dei fortissimus est clamor, & ita cœlum & terram replet, ut præter eum Deus nihil audiat, at compescit omnes omnium aliarum rerum clamores:* Luth. *Tom.* 4.

Of what an easie quick access
My blessed Lord, art thou; how suddenly
May our requests thy ear invade!
To shew that State dislikes not easiness:
If I but lift mine eyes my suit is made,
Thou canst no more not hear, than thou canst dye:

See more in *Herberts Poems*, pag. 95.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

Shewing the property of a true Chriſtian.

ONce more I might ſhew the duty and property of a ſincere Chriſtian, that can make this excellent uſe of ſolitarineſs: Carnal perſons love not to be alone, except they be ſuch whoſe conſtitution inclines them to Melancholy, and then they ſit poring on things without profit; 'tis only the gracious ſoul that can tell how to make the right uſe of ſolitarineſs, by having recourſe to God: No man cares for being alone but the ſerious perſon; and no man cares for going to God when alone, but the ſincere Chriſtian: Man is a ſociable creature, and naturally we have no mind to entertain our ſelves by our ſelves; A carnal heart hates a domeſtical Audit, men that have ſhrewiſh wives love not to be at home, and perſons that have guilty conſciences cannot endure to hold diſcourſe with them, leſt they be tormented before the time: Oh but a Chriſtian that is upright, and down-right, would know all that concerns his own heart; the beſt and worſt; therefore he communes with his own heart, as *David* did; and leſt he miſs or miſtake in his ſearch, he turns him to the heart-ſearching God by Prayer, and cryes out to him to ſearch his heart and diſcover him to himſelf: The life of Religion conſiſts in a ſouls communion with God in ſecret; a man hath ſo much Religion as he hath betwixt God and his own Soul, and no more: A true Saint dares approve his heart to God in a Corner: He is there exerciſing himſelf, like a Souldier by himſelf handling his Pike, and keeping his poſtures, that he may be better fitted for a more ſolemn onſet: Yea a Chriſtian doth purpoſely withdraw himſelf from

Pſal. 77. 6.

from company that he may converſe with God: *Papiſts* are true Chriſtian Apes: hence comes the ſolitary life of *Monks*; pretending to imitate *Elijah*, and *Eliſha*, *John Baptiſt* and the *Apoſtles*: but 'tis acknowledged by *Hierom*, and great ſtricklers for a monaſtick life, that this practice begun not till about the year 260, or 300. Some ſay *Hilarion*, others *Paulus Thebæus*, others *Antonius*, begun this manner of converſation: But certainly there is a vaſt difference betwixt thoſe Ancient Chriſtians ſolitary life, and the *Papiſts* way of Monaſtick living. 1. Thoſe firſt Chriſtians lived ſolitary of neceſſity, that they might lye hid more ſafely in a time of perſecution: 2. They were not compelled to give all to the poor; 3. They were not bound to a certain rule, nor did they ingage themſelves by a perpetual Vow to that Place and ſtate, but might change their manner of life if they ſaw good; they were not bound as to meats, marriage, faſting; 4. Theſe ancient *Monks* were of the Laity, not of the Clergy, nay not ſo much as *Deacons*, or *Presbyters*: 5. They had no conceit of merit in a Monaſtick life, till theſe latter ages: I may add, 6. Thoſe ancient *Monks* had a particular Calling and did work, as the *Monks* of *Bangor* that lived by the ſweat of their brows; and, 7. They were not tyed up from converſing abroad as there was occaſion; and occaſions there are manifold. 'Tis not fit perſons ſhould be always coopt up in a Corner, but that they be of uſe to others in their places and capacities: We were not born for our ſelves, nor muſt we live only within our ſelves, which would contradict the Law of Love and Charity: A conſtant ſolitarineſs expoſeth perſons to a world of temptations, it is not good to be alone, ſaith *Solomon*. An Ancient could ſpeak it from

Vid. Perk. *Demonſtr. problem. Monach.* p. 227, 228.

Clarks *Eccleſ. Hiſt. fol.* 13.

from his own experience, that a ſolitary life is inferiour to a common converſing, becauſe 'tis full of importunate cogitations, which like little flyes ariſing from Dung, fly in the eyes of the heart, and interrupt the Sabbath of the mind: Thus he.

Vita ſolitaria communi inferior eſt; quia importunis cogitationibus plena, quæ tanquam muſcæ minutiſſimæ de limo ſurgentes, volant in oculos cordis & interrumpunt Sabbathum mentis: Ivo Carnatenſis, *Epiſt.* 258. *Videſis plura in* Perk. *Ubi ſupra demonſtrat. Monaſteria veterum, ut plurimum, fuiſſe Scholas publicas,* i. e. *communitates docentium & diſcentium.*

But I need not trouble you with the mention of *Popiſh Fopperies.* A right-bred Chriſtian, that hath learned the truth as it is in Jeſus, being thruſt into a Corner, knows how to improve ſolitarineſs for ſoul-advantage; and voluntarily doth withdraw himſelf into a Corner, that he may ſet himſelf to the work of God in good earneſt: Hence ſaith the Apoſtle, concerning Husband and Wife, 1 *Cor.* 7. 5. *Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with conſent for a time, that you may give your ſelves to faſting and prayer*: ——Thence note, that it's convenient ſometimes for Chriſtians to ſequeſter themſelves from neareſt Relations, that they may have freer communion with God in holy Duties: Only let theſe four cautions and limitations of the Text be obſerved, 1. That it be with mutual conſent, 2. But for a Seaſon, 3. The end and advantage, for Faſting and Prayer, 4. That they come together again: This reſpects not every days ordinary performances; but ſome ſolemn undertakings of ſtated and extraordinary Faſts in a day of danger or calamity; at which time, *the Bridegroom is to go forth of his Chamber, and the Bride out of her Cloſet*, Joel 2. 16. *i. e.* to ſequeſter themſelves from conjugal delights, to afflict their ſouls by Faſting and Prayer: But in theſe caſes,

Vide Pareum in loc.

caſes, a ſound Chriſtian's due diſcretion regulated by the general rules laid down in Scripture, will help in ſuch performances, that he may not daſh on either rock, of Superſtition or Negligence; but maintain a cloſe and conſtant communion with God, both in the duties of his general and particular calling in publick Ordinances, and in private and ſecret duties.

Thus much for the firſt Uſe.

CHAP IV.

The Second Uſe, viz. *Of Reprehenſion.*

SECT. I.

Wicked men reproved.

1. HEre is juſt ground of ſharp rebuke to all graceleſs, prayerleſs perſons, who underſtand nothing of this duty; they know not what it is to tug and ſtruggle with the Lord in Cloſet-Prayer. *David* ſaith, *The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not ſeek after God, God is not in all his thoughts*, Pſal. 10. 4. He cannot pray aright any where, much leſs in ſecret: the ſame Pſalm tells us what he doth in ſecret, *ver.* 8, 9, 10. *In the ſecret places doth he murder the innocent, his eyes are privily ſet againſt the poor:* The Apoſtle ſaith, *It is a ſhame even to ſpeak of thoſe things that are done of them in ſecret*, Eph. 5. 12. Oh the abominable practices of prophane ſpirits in a corner! Their conſciences can tell them ſad ſtories of ſecret ſins, which none but the God of Heaven and themſelves know of, yea becauſe they ſee not God, they think God ſees not them; like the ſilly bird, becauſe ſhe thruſts her head into a buſh, thinks ſhe is hid from the Fowler, though her

her body be expoſed to open view; carnal mens Maxim is like that Monkiſh one, [*Caute ſi non Caſte,*] Carry it warily, if not chaſtly; if they can hide their ſin from men, they take no notice whether God ſee them or no; and, from wiſhing that he did not ſee, begin to ſuſpect whether he do ſee or no; and at laſt arrive to thoſe mens arrogant demand, Who ſeeth us? Or that poſitive concluſion, *Pſal.* 97. 4. *The Lord ſhall not ſee, neither ſhall the God of Jacob regard.* But what ſaith the *Pſalmiſt* to theſe brutiſh Sots? *He that planted the ear, ſhall he not hear? He that formed the eye, ſhall he not ſee?* ver. 9. Let theſe *Atheiſts* know that God ſees, and ſets down all their ſecret wickedneſs, and will bring it forth before Angels and Men at the great day of reckoning: The ſin of *Judah* is written with a pen of Iron, and with a point of a Diamond, it can never be razed out but by the blood of Chriſt; and though by multiplyed acts of notorious ſinning, ſome may blur the engravings of ſin on the table of their heart, yet it ſhall be as writing with the juice of Lemmons, being held to the fire of Gods wrath, 'tis as legible to the conſcience as the firſt moment when the ſin was committed: Oh the ſecret wickedneſſes that wicked men have to reckon for! But where are the ſecret Prayers? Alas, how rarely or how formally do they wait on God alone? Cuſtom, vain-glory, and carnal intereſt may put them on joyning in publick Prayer, or Family-duty; but they are ſtrangers to this ſpiritual ſelf-denying duty of Cloſet-Prayer: The carnal hypocrite expoſeth all to open view; he is like an houſe with a beautiful Frontiſpiece, but every room within is dark, as one ſaith? he is a rotten Poſt finely guilded: he hath dreſſed himſelf in the garb of Religion, and will be as devout as the beſt in Temple-worſhip; but follow him to his Cloſet, he cannot afford God one hour in a week; he doth not make conſcience

Jer. 17. 1.

of secret Prayer: this gains him no credit with men, and therefore is little used. This (rightly performed) opens the heart to God, which the unsound professor dare not do: I shall shew hereafter, whether the Hypocrite may use Closet-Prayer, and wherein he is distinguisht from a sincere soul in that duty: At present I am reproving those that never use it, that look upon it as below them; they either dare not be alone, or scorn to stoop so low, and sigh out their hearts to God in a corner, as though they would not be beholding to the great God for any mercy; but in their hearts and practice speak the language of those proud *Atheists* in *Jer.* 2. 31. *We are Lords, we will come no more unto thee?* But let such know they shall dye like Men, and be damn'd like Devils; that imagine they are gods, and will not be beholding to our God for mercy: Lord have mercy on these poor prayerless sinners, that understand not the necessity and mystery of Closet-Prayer, but look upon it as needless and are ready to say, Its more ado than needs: but let these prepare to make good that desperate assertion at the Bar of Gods justice with flames about their ears, and let such know that God will answer their cavils against plain duty, after another manner than his Ministers can do now. To which dreadful Judgment we leave them, except prevented by a speedy and sincere Repentance.

SECT. II.

The Godly reproved.

But the persons to be principally reproved at present are the professors of Religion, that acknowledge this to be a duty, but grievously neglect it. I fear, Gods Children are not so constant and conscientious in the performance of this duty of Closet-Prayer as they ought

ought to be. Are not good Souls guilty of frequent omiſſions, intermiſſions, at leaſt negligent performance of this duty? It was one of old Mr. *Dod*'s Inſtructions, that at night we ſhould ask our ſelves, Have I twice this day humbled my ſelf before God in private? And again, How did I pray, in Faith and Love? I am afraid, many of us ſhould give but a ſorry account of theſe ſerious inquiries. Let's be aſhamed, lay it to our hearts, and give God glory by repentance and reformation.

Who goes to bed and doth not pray,
Maketh two Nights to every Day.
Herbert.

For the humbling of our hearts in this caſe, let me propound theſe ten awakning Interrogatories, that we may mourn for our neglect of this duty of Cloſet-Prayer.

1. Are you not very unlike Jeſus Chriſt? Is not he the perfect copy that we ſhould write after? And do we not find him often in private Prayer? We meet with him in this ſolitary duty ſometimes in the day, ſometimes in the night, ſometimes all night; in a Garden, in a Mountain, he took all opportunities to go to his Father; *All the days of his fleſh he offered up Prayers and Supplications with ſtrong crying and tears*, *Heb.* 5. 7. As he was a man of ſorrows, ſo he was a man of Prayers, and the ſharper his ſorrows, the ſtronger his cryes, *Luk.* 22. 44. *Being in an agony, he prayed more earneſtly*: And was not this for our example? And for our advantage? ſhould we not learn of him? Nay, doth not our very Chriſtianity conſiſt in our conformity to Chriſt? Alas, how unlike him are moſt of us? Shall we paſs for Chriſtians, that follow not his ſteps? Was it not bleſſed *Paul*'s ſtudy, and ambition to be conformed to this bleſſed Pattern? Can we imitate a better perſon? Was it neceſſary, Chriſt ſhould

Luk. 6. 12. Mat. 26. 36.

wreſtle for us, and is it not neceſſary we ſhould wreſtle with God for our own ſouls? Or, doth Chriſts praying for us excuſe our pleading for our ſelves? No, no, as it was for our example and benefit in the days of his fleſh, ſo his preſent interceſſion in Heaven doth both imply and incourage our praying: for we are to ask in his name, and imploy our dear Advocate, that we may ſpeed: and ſhall not we (as it were) ſet him a work, and ſend up our Prayers to be mixt with his ſweet incenſe? The Lord humble us for, and pardon to us our neglects and omiſſions!

2. Are you not herein very unlike the Saints of God? The ſeed of *Jacob* are wreſtlers with God. God hath no Children ſtill-born, they all cry *Abba*, Father: *Jacob* wreſtled with God in ſecret Prayer, and ever ſince, all the Saints in all ages have born that name, *Pſal.* 24. 6. *This is the generation of them that ſeek him, that ſeek thy face, O Jacob, Selah*, i. e. That ſeek the God of *Jacob*, as *Jacob* did. And indeed every one that is godly will thus pray. There might be brought a cloud of witneſſes in all ages of praying Saints, that converſed with God in ſecret: 'Tis recorded of the Apoſtle *James*, that his knees were as hard as Camels feet with praying: Some have ſought out for private places to pray in, others have riſen out of their beds to pray; others have ſet days apart to humble themſelves in ſecret by Faſting and Prayer, others would never adventure on buſineſs without ſeeking God: Such as are acquainted with Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtories, or Chriſtian Experiences, may find ſtore of inſtances of this ſort: And why ſhould we be unlike our Brethren? Have we not all one Spirit, as well as all one Father? And is not this a Spirit of Grace and Supplication? And is it not that which on all occaſions draws the Soul to its Father? 'Tis ſaid of *Paul*, when newly converted, *Behold he prayeth*, *Act.* 9. 11. Others do not

Pſalm. 32. 6.

not see it, but I know it; there he is in a corner, sighing and seeking me; Go *Ananias*, enquire for him, he is now one of you, a real convert, for, *Behold he prayeth*: A Soul praying in secret is worthy observation, there's an *Ecce* put upon it, *Behold he prayeth*! And why should we that pretend to be Saints be unlike our brethren?

3. Are you not herein unlike your selves in former times? When God did at first work upon your hearts, did you not then run to God in a corner? Did you not set your selves intently to the duty of secret Prayer? How often did God find you by your selves, sighing, sorrowing, weeping, bleeding, breathing after God, pouring out your hearts like water before the face of the Lord? and your heavenly Father pitied you, spoke very kindly to you, wiped off your tears, cheared your hearts, heard your prayers, and made those dayes of grief, times of love. Oh the sweet embraces that then were betwixt your souls and God? Have you forgotten such a Chamber? Such a Closet, such a Barn, such a Wood? Where you sometimes walkt and meditated, sometimes fell prostrate and wept before the Lord, till you had no more power to weep? If you have forgotten those blessed dayes, your God hath not: *He remembers thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after him in a solitary Wilderness. Jer. 2. 2.* Canst not thou remember the day when thou wouldst rather have been with thy God in a private Room, than upon a Princes Throne? Yea, thou thoughtest thou wast to do nothing else but cry and pray in secret: thou wast at it every day, yea many times in a day: How comes it to pass that there's such a change? that thou dost so rarely go to visit thy old friend in a Corner? Is he changed? Is he not so good and kind, as he was wont to be? Hast thou found any fault in God? Or art not thou blame-worthy? What's become of thy ancient spirit of Prayer? Why dost thou

forget thy sweetest wrestling-place? Why dost thou not inquire for these good old wayes of communion with thy God?

SECT. III.

Saints neglects, further reproved.

4. LEt me further expostulate with Gods Children, that are rarely exercised in this duty of Secret-Prayer.

Do you not deprive your selves of many sweet refreshments? Have not your souls had sweet experience of ravishing incomes in secret duties? How many pleasant morsels have you eaten alone? Have not these stolen waters been sweet? And would they not be so again, if you would open the same sluice? Oh what hints of love might your souls have, that no creature would know of? Secret influences are conveyed to souls in secret duties; these you block up by neglect: Ah sirs, Are the consolations of God small to you? Is communion with God of no worth? Why are you so unwilling to take pains to go to your Father? Especially when you know he hath a kindness for you? Have you ever lost by such duties? Will not your gains infinitely contervail your pains? Ask those that use it most, they will tell you, it is the sweetest time they spend: Yea, cannot your own experience attest it? Did you ever lose your labour when you set your selves about the work in good earnest? Hath not this close and privy trading with God brought in much spiritual profit? Beloved friends, you little consider the good you miss of, for want of performing this excellent duty: But that's not all.

5. Do you not by neglect of secret prayer expose your selves to many sad temptations? Watching and Prayer are singular helps against temptation, *Mat.* 26. 41.

26. 41. I have heard, that Satan hath openly professed that he hath watched when some of Gods children have gone out without Closet-Prayer, and that day he hath gotten great advantage against them, sometimes by tripping up their heels, and casting them down from their excellency, into some grosse iniquity; sometimes tormenting their hearts with blasphemous, or soul-perplexing injections: Sometimes God hath left them to fall into some afflictive snare, laid by this subtil Fowler, which hath cost them many bitter pangs, all this and much more hath been the fruit of such neglects o Christians, Have you not found this too true by sad experience? When you have gone abroad without calling on God, hath not God secretly withdrawn from you? Hath not Satan obtained his designs upon you? Have not your hearts been growing out of frame? Some lust increasing, grace decaying, and your souls at the brink of some astonishing fall? When you have gone out in the morning without a good breakfast with God, Have you not been apt to gather wind and vanity to the prejudice of your souls health? If you ingage not God by Prayer to go with you, What security have you for that day? If God leave you, the Devil may do what he list with you, and hamper you in a thousand snares and sins.

6. Doth not your neglect of secret Prayer argue little love to God? Or delight to be in his Company? When persons have a dear affection to each other, they love to be together: Love delights in union and communion. Yea, when persons love intirely, they withdraw from other company, that they may enjoy each other with more indeared familiarity; the presence of a third mixeth the streams of Communication, and mars their intimate communion: And if you did passionately love the Lord, would you not withdraw from others, that your souls might injoy some fresh and refreshing in-

tercourse with your best Beloved? How can you say, you love him, when you have no mind of his company? If you did indeed love him, you would hold him, and not let him go, until you had (with the Spouse) brought him into the Chambers of intimate communion, and solitary recesses; *Love is the weight of the soul*, and draws it to the object beloved: If your hearts were ravisht with him you would take more pleasure in conversing with him, you would bless God for an opportunity of injoying him: But this strangeness speaks a great defect in this noble grace: And would you be esteemed such as love not God? What a sad thing is it to be low and scant in love to God under such strong engagements to love? Poor soul! have not those silken silver cords of love which have been cast about thee, drawn thee nearer, and bound thee faster to thy God than thus? Have not such bellows and incentives kindled and increased thy spark of love into a flame? lament thy sin, and shame thy self before thy God, for this decay of love, and dangerous neglect.

Cant. 3. 5.

Amor meus, pondus meum.

Do not you by these omissions declare your selves ingrateful to the grace of God? It's Gods way to draw souls to approach to him, by holding out promises of reward, as we do offer Apples, Fruit, &c. to children, to intice them to us: nor is it a Bait to couzen and insnare us, but real offers of kindness to us, whereof we may partake, and wherewith we may be happy: Suppose a Prince desire a Beggars company, with expressions of dear affections, and promises of many kindnesses; Is it not gross ingratitude, if she fling away, and scorn the motion? Or suppose a potent Person send to a poor man a loving message, telling him he hath considered his case, and hath appointed time and place, that they two together may confer about the necessary concernments

of

of this poor man; he shall have free admission and liberty without disturbance to present his petition, and ask what he will, and it shall be granted; none shall be present, but only they two shall converse familiarly together, for the good of the poor man: But instead of a thankful acceptance of this kindness, the poor man picks quarrels with the messenger or message, grows sullen and perverse, runs away and saith, I need neither his counsel nor assistance; Let him bestow his kindness where he will, I will not meddle with him: Were not this gross ingratitude? And how would it be taken? The case is thine, Soul, that neglectest secret duties: the God of Heaven gives thee notice to meet him in such a room, to negotiate freely the main concernments of thy precious soul, and thou art coy and shy, and wilt not come near him, but either plainly denyest, or heedlessly delayest: Oh monstrous folly! Oh gross ingratitude! Be ashamed of it, be humbled for it, thy God takes it ill that thou art so loath to be happy, that thou even forsakest thine own mercies, and wilt go twice as far another way to gratifie a friend, rather than go alone into thy Closet to please thy God and profit thy poor soul: How long must God watch and wait, and strive and sue to have thy company; and thou dost still neglect and grow averse thereto? Oh be ashamed of it.

SECT. VI.

Three more sad Considerations for our Humiliation.

DO you not, by neglect of secret Prayer, resist the motions of the blessed Spirit? And is this no fault? Is it nothing to neglect communion with God the Father, or to improve the intercession of Jesus Christ the Mediator, but you must also slight the motions of God, the blessed Spirit? This is sad: How often

ten doth the holy Ghost knock at your doors, stir you up, spur you forwards unto duty, and take you by the hand, offering its assistance if you'l go to God, and yet do you refuse? Do you make nothing of quenching, grieving, yea vexing the good Spirit of God? Consider what you do: as you deal with it, so it will deal with you; if you do not embrace its call, perhaps it will not be present at your call: And what can you do in duty, without it? If you strive against it, it will cease striving with you: Be it known to you, you have not this Heavenly wind at your command; and you may toss in the boat of duty long, but shall not approach the port without it: Nothing but the Spirit of God can carry thy soul to God: And what can excite and comfort thee when thy Assistant and Comforter is slighted and sadned? Grieve therefore, Christian, for thy grieving of the Spirit, lay to heart thy careless quenching of this holy fire; and let those waters of lust or neligence cost thee the waters of godly sorrow and repentance, that this sin may not be laid to thy charge: Say as that Divine Poet,

And art thou grieved, sweet and sacred Dove:
When I am sour;
And cross thy Love?
Grieved for me? The God of strength and power
Griev'd for a worm? which when I tread,
I pass away and leave it dead.

See the rest in *Herbert's* Poems, on *Eph.* 5. 30. p. 128.

9. If you can only pray in company, what will you do when your company is gone? A time may come when you may be left alone, as Christ saith he was. You had need ingage the Father to be with you, that you may say as the Apostle, 1 *John* 1. 3. *Truly our fellowship is with the Father*: 'Tis true, communion of

Saints

Saints is desirable, but external Communion is not always attainable: you may be thrust out by divine Providence, now it will be sad to be at a loss when persons are alone: 'Tis a strange expression of some, that they know not how to live, if such and such Christian friends or godly Relations be taken away; why what's the matter? Are they in the place of God? Is your spiritual life maintained by the leaden pipes, or by the living springs that stream through them? Alas, sirs, if you more understood and used this art of drawing influences from God immediately through Christ by secret Prayer, you would not be so discouraged with the loss of friends; you would say, Indeed 'tis true, my loss is great, such a one had a notable gift in Prayer, and spoke my very heart to God, but though he be gone, is my God gone? Is Prayer gone? Though I cannot get such moving expressions as such had, yet I opened my heart to God as I could in secret formerly; and there's the same refuge now, the same road unto this City and Sanctuary I went in, and therefore all my comfort is not gone, blessed be my God: But a poor soul that hath leaned upon the staff of others inlargements will be shrewdly put to it when that staff is gone: And, Is it not a great disparagement to a noble and immortal Soul, that it cannot treat and entertain its God alone? What, cannot God and an Heaven-born Soul converse together without *Auxiliaries*? Must another interpose as an instrument, without whom you cannot injoy communion with God? Be ashamed of it, and chide your selves, as not acting suitably to your rational spirits, much less to a supernatural Principle of grace.

10. Lastly, let me further demand of you, what if our Lord should call you away and find you under the guilt of the neglect of this known duty? What confusion, grief, and jealousie would possess you if death arrest you in such a state? What an hurry was forlorn

Soul

Saul in, when the *Philistines* were upon him, and he had not offered sacrifice unto God? And what a desperate plunge will you be put to when the King of terrors is upon you, and you have not personally and privately been seeking God? Though you may be right and safe for the main, yet your spirits will be much perplexed, and you will suffer shrewd rebukes from your own consciences for your omissions, and will be put to that last prayer of a dying Saint (eminent in the Church) *The Lord forgive me my sins of omission*; and possibly may want that spiritual solace in a dying hour that praying Souls may have: Oh what a blessed thing will it be, if our dear Redeemer find a soul upon its knees before the Lord? Oh the hearty welcom it will give unto its God! This is the time he waited for, he was got into a corner, was sighing for his sins, pleading for mercy, breathing after grace, and panting for glory: and behold, what a quick return doth his God make? Even while he is speaking and praying, the Lord doth send a guard of Angels to conduct the soul into eternal Mansions, where God and the Soul shall part no more. Blessed, for ever happy is that soul whom its Lord when he cometh shall find so doing! Now consider of it, Whether state would you be found in? And do not you know, his Coming may be sudden and unexpected? Would you be found under neglect, or in the faithful performance of a duty? Would you not be carried from your Closet-devotion to eternal communion with God? Oh then take out Lord's most wholsom counsel, *Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is*, Mark 13. 33.

I might here challenge Christians also, not only for their neglect of, but careless performance of this duty of Closet-prayer: with what sorry shifts do we put off God? How hard, dead, unbelieving, distracted are our hearts in secret? God takes much pleasure in Adverbs:

verbs: it pleaſeth not God that a duty be done, except it be well done. Many ſatisfie their own conſciences that they have prayed, but conſider not how they prayed: there's a Curſe on ſuch as do the work of God negligently; and, that have in their flock a male, and offer to the Lord a corrupt thing: And it's a fearful thing to get a curſe upon our knees, when we come for a bleſſing: Look to it, God takes notice how you pray, the Devil ſtands under your Cloſet-window, and heareth what you ſay to God in ſecret, all the while ſtudying how he may commence a ſuit againſt you for your duty: Like thoſe that come to Sermons to carp or catch at what the Preacher ſaith; or (as one ſaith) like a cunning opponent in the Schools, while his adverſary is buſie reading his Poſition, he is ſtudying to confute it; and oh, what advantage do we often give Satan to trip us and take us tardy? What occaſion do we afford him to accuſe us to God and to our ſelves, while we have our filthy garments on us? Yea remiſsneſs in our duties brings decay in grace. Tradeſmen may go behind hand by being careleſs in their dealings, as well as by being much out of their ſhops: Alas, what ſad decay is in our ſouls for want of cloſe and conſtant communion with God? We have very perverſe hearts, we have much ado with them; when we would do good, evil is preſent: it is our great ſin we are ſo much out of order, even upon our knees. Satan ſends his Imps to haunt and torment us, he jogs our hand when we are to write a Letter to Heaven in our Prayers; ſo that we can ſcarce make ſenſe of what we preſent to God: Our thoughts are unfixed, ranging abroad like a Spaniel to a thouſand objects, ſo that ſometimes we have loſt our ſelves, and know not where we are: Oh let us lament our vain and trifling ſpirits in ſecret duties, and turn us unto God for help, as a Servant, when the child he tends is troubleſom,

Jer. 48. 13. Mal. 1. 14.

bleſom, and will not be ruled by him, calls out to the Father to come to him, who no ſooner ſpeaks the word, but all is whiſt with him; our God can ſet in order our unruly ſpirits, only he will be called upon by earneſt Prayer.

Thus much for this Uſe.

CHAP. V.

The Third Uſe is of Inſtruction.

SECT. I.

MY next and main work is to help us in the duty of Cloſet-Prayer, by propounding ſome helps and rules for our direction: which I ſhall reduce to theſe four heads.

Viz.
1. *Preparatives to it.*
2. *Eſſentials in it.*
3. *Circumſtances about it.*
4. *Conſequences upon it.*

1. Look to your State and ſtanding: If you be not real Saints, you are not fit for this ſpiritual duty: Your Relation muſt be changed by converting grace: Hence the Text ſaith, *Pray to thy Father*. See then that God be your Father in Jeſus Chriſt; elſe you cannot truly cry *Abba, Father*; If we muſt be reconciled to our Brother before we offer our gift, much more to God, for how can two walk together except they be agreed? I deny not but a carnal ſoul ſhould retire himſelf into a corner, examine his ſtate, fall down on his knees, and beg converting and pardoning grace; and thus they muſt

must acquaint themselves with God, that they may come before him; for unsound unconverted sinners have no right as Children to call to the King of Heaven, though as Creatures they may and must seek unto God, yet they worship afar off. 'Tis the gracious Christian only that prayeth acceptably; wicked mens Prayers are abomination; an hypocrite shall not come before him, *Job* 13. 16. And indeed, till you be real Saints, you'l have no mind to buckle close to this duty: truth of grace will capacitate you for secret approaches to God; strength of grace will elevate you to God; and evidence of sincerity will make you come boldly to the Throne of Grace: Therefore try your state, inquire what relation you have to God, or else expect no familiarity with him. God will not take the wicked by the hand to lead them into these Chambers of communion, the throne of iniquity hath no fellowship with him; Our Lord Jesus marrieth none but Widows that are divorced from all other Husbands, and he opens his heart to none but his betrothed Spouse, her he leads into a solitary place and speaks to her heart: Oh Sirs! come over clearly to God, by closing with Christ, renounce your selves, get united to him, and then come and welcom to enjoy communion with him in Closet-Prayer.

2. Dispatch other things off your hearts and hands: Let not your earthly occasions intrude into your Closet-Exercises: Say to the cares and affairs of the world as *Abraham* to his Servants, *Stay there while I go and worship the Lord yonder*: Or as *Nehemiah* in another case, *I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down to you*: So do thou say, I have appointed other times and seasons for attending worldly businesses, let me alone with my God, every thing is beautiful in its season: Communion with God is as much as I can attend at once, I must not be diverted by other objects, the business I am about

about is of the greatest importance, I must consult how I may attend upon the Lord without distraction, and worldly matters have distracted me in God's service, and have cost me many a tear; therefore get away from me. Why should the work of the Lord cease? Why should I be hindred from my God? What can you afford me that can be worth one hours communion with my God? Thus do you actually renounce the world, for you cannot mind two things at once: And observe it, If you leave any matters of the world tarrying for your attendance, the thoughts of them will attend you, and make you cut your duties short, and run away before your hearts be warmed: Therefore, if it may be, dispatch them, however rid your hearts of them: The Heathen left their Shooes at the Temple-doors, to shew that all earthly occasions and affections must be left behind when we go to God.

Let vain or busie thoughts have there no part:
Bring not thy Plough, thy Plots, thy Pleasures thither.
Christ purg'd his Temple, so must thou thy heart.
All worldly thoughts are but thieves met together
To couzen thee.——Herbert.

SECT. II.

Two more Preparatives to Secret Prayer.

3. SEt your selves in Gods presence: Although you be not within the view of any mortal creature, yet the eternal God sees what you are a going about: So saith the Text, *Your Father sees in secret*, darkness or closeness hides not from him: and 'tis more than one God sees you, than if all the men on earth gazed at you: His eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the Sun,

and

and he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; therefore waſh your hands in innocency before you compaſs his Altar: For if you regard iniquity in your heart, God will not hear your Prayer: Therefore let the Lord always before you, eſpecially now you are ſetting your ſelves before the Lord; if that Caveat was enough to beget reverence in an Heathen, *Cato ſees thee*; Oh what reverence would the ſenſe of Gods omnipreſence beget in thy heart, if duly weighed? Chriſtians, weight your ſpirits with ſuch Meditations as theſe, God's eye is never off me, I am daily walking in the Sun; but now, I am ſetting my ſelf to pray in ſecret; I come to appear before God in a ſpecial manner; I may deceive men and my ſelf, but God will not be mocked; I had need now engage my heart to approach unto God, that's the thing he looks for. Oh for a ſpirit ſuitable to ſuch a Majeſty whom I come to worſhip! Lord, draw out my affections, unite my heart, excite my graces, that my whole Soul may be carryed after God: Thus commit thy works to the Lord, and thy thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed: when thou art ſetting thy face towards a duty, where thou art ſure to meet Satan, and carry with thee a corrupt deceitful heart, let God know from thy mouth whither thou art going, what thy fears are. Never (ſaith one) doth the ſoul march in ſo good order, as when it puts it ſelf under the conduct of God; and never is it ſo awful, as when it ſets it ſelf under the eye of God, *Gen.* 17. 1. *I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect.* When you ſenſibly diſcern you are kneeling before God, will not this make you perfect, ſincere, and grow holier? If you think God be not in your Cloſets, what do you go to pray there for? And if you know he ſees you there,

Hab. 1. 13. Pſal. 26. 6. Pſal. 66. 18.

Cave, ſpectat Cato.

Pſal. 37. 5. Prov. 16. 3.

there, why do you not think so, and set your selves as in his presence? The child will stand demurely before his Father, the Scholar before his Master; and so will the gracious Soul before God in duty, if sensible of his presence.

4. Muster up your thoughts and wayes: Our thoughts and affections are like the strings of an Instrument out of tune, and therefore we must take some pains to wind and skrue them up. This is that which *Zophar* adviseth to, *Job* 11. 13. to prepare the heart, and then stretch forth the hands: And for this end, it would not be amiss when you come into a private room to pray in secret, first to read some portion of Scripture, which may be of use to compose your spirits; and like *David's* harp to *Saul*, drive away your wild imaginations: yea the word read, may afford you suitable matter of prayer to God. More particularly, let me add one experienced Help, which is this: When you are addressing your selves to God in secret Prayer, endeavour to fix your thoughts upon some particular subject to inlarge upon; there's no question, but you have sometimes one special errand to God, sometimes another, if you observe your condition well; be sure to mind that, whether it be to confess some predominant sin, to beg pardon of it, power against it: You may have in your eye some grace that you need more than ordinarily, and see your weakness and defect therein, *&c.* Now do not satisfie your selves in running out into generals only, but set your selves to plead the cause of your souls in that very case, which you have found out by serious inquiry, would most ingage you at that time to go to God about; expatiate principally upon that subject: And this I conceive to be a *taking to our selves words*, (which the Holy Ghost directeth us to, in Prayer) not a form of such and such phrases, but some special subject

Hos. 14. 2. דבר *Verbum, res, negotium: Vid.* Buxt. *lex.*

subject matter to speak to our God about: the word in *Hebrew* imports so much.

Now an intent and earnest pursuit of such a special subject at the Throne of Grace is of use in these two respects:

1. You will find it an help against distractions, wandrings, withdrawings from God; when you purposely set your selves to mind one thing, you'l be more intent upon it, and lay out more pains about it, than when you allow your selves liberty in variety of matter. When the stream runs one way, 'tis stronger than dispersed into several channels, so, when the Christian unites his strength to plead with God about a particular business, he is usually more warm and affectionate, and so less subject to distraction. *Vis unita fortior.*

2. It will help you to inlarge your selves in spreading particular cases before the Lord, in pat and proper expressions, even before others as you have a call and opportunity; and this is that which is called, the gift of Prayer, which is of singular use, when a person can particularly and pathetically lay open a condition, plead with God, improve promises, and rationally expostulate even with the Almighty about a spiritual or temporal concernment: This holy Art is got by a frequency in secret Prayer, and particular pleading for a mans own soul: This is the last preparatory; think before-hand what business you have to God in a peculiar manner, and drive that nail (as it were) to the head: you cannot think to speak of all things to God at one time, but take that which is of present emergent use and importance, and set your selves to inlarge upon that; follow that home till you feel your hearts be warmed and affected, and so have some tokens for good that God will return a sensible answer: You'l say, Must we thus prepare our selves before every duty of secret Prayer; we have not time for it? I shall answer this in the words

His Book, called *An help to better hearts for better times*, Pag. 196,197. read more of this Subject.

of my dear and reverend Father *Angier:* there are some separating duties that prepare for others, as examination, meditation, prayer; and they do prepare by stirring up the grace of God, and providing an heavenly assistance to begin with us in the duty: If thou canst not always have separating time betwixt other occasions and Gods worship, yet have some separating thoughts ere thou enter upon the duty; thou art not fit else to meddle with wisdom: Thus he. 'Tis true, some have not the leisure that others have, yet so much preparation is necessary for every duty as may withdraw the heart from other objects, and weight the spirit with a due sense of the work we have in hand, and sometimes this may be done suddenly; yet as for such as have more time to work upon their hearts, and state their souls case by mustering up themselves to the work, neglect a duty, and cannot groundedly expect the Lords presence: and this I conceive is the reason why the Lords people miss of God in secret Prayer, at least one reason is, because they do not make such conscience, and take such care of preparing their hearts as they ought: Ah Christians, when you come into your Closet, sit down and pause a little, before you fall down upon your knees, clear up your state, shake off other business, set your selves in Gods presence, and muster up your sins or wants, or mercies you purpose to spread before the Lord; a Client will consider all his matters, before he come to state his case to his advocate; a poor patient will bethink himself, how he is, that he may tell his ailings to his Physitian; and a petitioner will not go hand over head unto his Prince, but order his cause before hand, that he may plead it more effectually: And shall not we much more prepare our selves to wait upon the God of Heaven.

SECT.

SECT. III.

Directions concerning the Eſſentials of ſecret Prayer.

2. THe ſecond ſort of rules is concerning ſome things eſſentially requiſite to the right performance of the duty of ſecret Prayer, which you are to look to in the duty; and theſe are ſuch as are required in all ſorts of Prayer.

Viz. *that it be performed,*
1. *With the heart.*
2. *By the help of the Spirit.*
3. *According to Gods will.*
4. *In the name of Chriſt.*

1. *Secret Prayer muſt be hearty Prayer:* an heartleſs duty is a worthleſs duty; yea the whole heart muſt be ingaged in it, *Pſal.* 119.10. *With my whole heart have I ſought thee:* It is the heart that God chiefly looks after, *Prov.*23.26. *My Son, give me thy heart:* nothing elſe can pleaſe God, if the heart be wanting; if the heart be ingaged in the duty, he will rather diſpenſe with other weakneſſes, where there's not wilful negligence: Obſerve it, in that worſhip of God we perform with others, a mans gifts may be of uſe, though his heart go not along with his voice; but in Cloſet-Prayer it doth no good at all, except the heart be ingaged; therefore God principally requires the heart in other duties, in this he only requires the heart, for the voice is not neceſſary: To love and ſerve the Lord our God with all our heart, Mark 12. 30, 33.

ſoul, mind, ſtrength, is a keeping of the Law, and more than all whole burnt-offerings and ſacrifices: We ſhould pray with every faculty of the ſoul, and with the utmoſt ſtrength of every faculty: God deſerves and requires our ſtrongeſt affections: That's but a vain worſhip that's perſormed without the heart; right attendance on God is an ingaging the heart to approach to God: Chriſtians, in all your addreſſes to God, mind the object of worſhip; let the ſubject worſhipping, and object worſhipped, be cloſely united; look beyond the duty: it's one thing to have communion with an Ordinance, and another thing to have communion with God in an Ordinance. Gods dear Children know what this means; for ſometimes they are more taken up with expreſſions, affections, or ſome accidentals in the performance, than with the object of worſhip they ſhould be intent upon: But this is very dangerous; for whatſoever interpoſeth betwixt the ſoul and God, to divert the thoughts from God, is an *Idol*: *Ezek.* 14. 3. *Theſe men have ſet up their Idols in their hearts*. *Sept.* reads it, they have put their thoughts upon their hearts, *i. e.* They have committed Idolatry with their own imaginations: inſtead of worſhipping God, their minds have ſtuck upon ſomething ſhort of God, after which they have (as it were) run a whoring even in the duty. I ſhall not deliver that as the ſenſe of the place, yet it may be an uſeful note: I fear many of us are guilty of a kind of ſpiritual fine-ſpun Idolatry, by heterogeneal thoughts in holy duties, that pluck us from God, when we are approaching to him. The Lord humble us for this, and fix our thoughts upon God, that we may ſay as the Church, *Iſa.* 26. 8. *The deſire of our ſoul is to thy name, and*

Mat. 15. 8, 9.

Jer. 30. 21.

Ὅυτοι ἔθεντο τὰ διανοήματα αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν. 70.

and to the remembrance of thee. Cyprian saith, Every secular thought must depart, and the mind must be taken up with nothing but what we are about: he tells, the practice of the Church in his time was, that the Minister before Prayer, prepares the peoples mind, saying [*Sursum corda*] Lift up your hearts, and they answer [*Habemus ad Dominum*] We have them up to the Lord: whereby, saith he, we are admonished, that in Prayer we must think of nothing but the Lord: What the Minister said to the People, do you say to your selves; [*Sursum corda*] lift up your hearts: Let every one say, I am now worshipping an Heart-searching God, Oh that my heart were with God. The Ancients (saith *Luther*) finely described Prayer to be an ascent of the mind to God: Oh that I did experimentally know, what this means in *Syntaxi, i. e.* in coupling and joyning of my heart to God. Lord, gather in my roving and wandring spirit: This is the first direction, *Mind the frame of your hearts.*

Cogitatio omnis secularis & carnalis secedat, nec quicquam tunc animus, quam id solum cogitet quod precatur: ideo & sacerdos ante Orationem præfatione præmissa, parat fratrum mentes, Dicendo, Sursum corda, et dura respondet plebs, Habemus ad Dominum, quo admoneamur nihil aliud nos, quam Dominum cogitare debere. Cyp. *Serm. de Orat. Dom. p.* 246.

Ascensus mentis ad Deum. Luth. *Colleq. myst. fol.* 239.

2. *Implore and expect the Spirits assistance:* Prayer must be by the Spirits inlarging influence; hence it is called the Spirit of grace and supplication: it helps our infirmities by making our souls to cry out, *Abba, Father*, with unutterable groans: A Christian should spread the sails of his soul for the gales of Gods grace, which will carry the praying Saint apace towards God, yea and reach the ear of God, for he knoweth the mind

Zech. 12. 10. Rom. 8. 26.

Phil. 3. 3. Jude 20.

of the Spirit: This is that which is called, a worshipping God in the Spirit, a praying in the holy Ghost, *i. e.* either as to the matter of the Prayer dictated by the Spirit, or as to the manner of praying, the soul being actuated by the holy Ghost: For I conceive it may import the former as well as the latter, as other Scriptures compared hold forth: Alas, flesh and blood will put up such petitions as God will not accept, or in such a manner as is no way suitable to his spiritual Nature: The truth is, Christians, you will but bungle at the work without this help of Gods Spirit, and God will take notice of you except he hear his own language: do not think you can wrestle out the business your selves, you must be beholding to God for help in Prayer, as well as for hearing your Prayer; your own spirits will not carry you to Heaven: that which is from the earth is earthly, and riseth no higher than earth, but the holy Ghost will elevate your souls to God: Therefore, I beseech you, Sirs, beg the Spirit, yield to its motions, improve its operations; say when you are going to duty, Lord, now stir up thy self, and stir up thy grace in my heart: *Awake, oh North-wind, and come thou South; blow upon thy Garden*, Cant. 4. 16. [My Soul] that the spices thereof may flow out [that graces may be exercised and exerted:] Lord, I am low, flat, hard; send the powerful arm of thy blessed Spirit to work all gracious dispositions in me, and raise up my affections to thee: I see I am below the duty, and infinitely below thee in the duty, but thou, and thou alone canst raise me up, quicken, soften my dead and rocky heart; come Lord, and shew thy powerful Arm, let it appear what God can do for a sorry worm. Oh lift me up to thee, that my soul may enjoy some sweet communion with thee:

See Mark 12. 36. & 13. 11.

thee: Send thy ſpirit to fetch in my wanton wandring heart: Oh for ſome fire from Heaven to burn up my ſacrifice, or elſe it will lye like a lump of fleſh, and be no true Holocauſt of pure Incenſe before thee: Let thy Spirit ſcatter theſe miſts of ignorance, and drive away theſe flies of diſtracting thoughts, that my heart may be with thee, and my performance may be a ſweet ſavour in the noſtrils of God.

SECT. IV.

More Eſſentials in ſecret Prayer.

A Third ingredient in Prayer is, that it be according to God's will; it muſt have a warrant from the word; a word of Precept, or Promiſe, or Example, muſt be the ground of our petitions: a command is our warrant, a promiſe our incouragement; an example is our tract, and the footſteps of the flock wherein we muſt walk: He that asks amiſs ſhall not ſpeed, but if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us; and then we know we have the petitions that we deſired of him, 1 *Joh.* 5. 14, 15. Now, we ask according to his will, when both the matter of our petition is aright, and our end in asking is Gods glory, and our own or others ſpiritual good: otherwiſe, if we ask of God what we conceit to be a mercy, and have not asked counſel at God's mouth; or ask ſo as to conſume it upon our luſts, we may well meet with a denial: My friends, you may not ſay what you pleaſe in the preſence of God. *Conſider, God is in Heaven, you are on Earth, therefore be not raſh with your mouth, and let not your heart be haſty to utter any thing before God, let your words be few, and well weighed,* Eccleſ. 5. 2. The work you are about is a ſolemn buſineſs, do not ramble in extravagant deſires of unlawful things; think not that

God

God will patronize your luſts: and when you have aſked that which you conceive is according to his will, refer it wholly to his Will, ſay, The Will of the Lord be done: ſubmit pour ſelves to his diſpoſe, for time, manner, means, and all circumſtances for giving of it: ask temporal mercies conditionally, and ſpiritual Comforts with ſubmiſſion to Gods will; learn that petition, *Thy will be done*, to pray it as well as ſay it. Indeed *Luther* could ſay, Let my will be done; but he come off with this, My will, Lord, becauſe my will is melted into thine, there's but one will betwixt us: Let God's will be your will; 'tis fit it ſhould be ſo, our heavenly Father is wiſer than we: Conſider, a man cannot pray in faith, for that which he hath no warrant to ask: Beſides, *Ameſius* ſaith, If a man come not with an humble ſubmiſſion to Gods will, it were not a religious prayer directed to the ſupream Creator, but a kind of command by a ſuperiour to an inferiour, or a familiar diſcourſe as amongſt equals: Therefore let us humbly plead Gods Will as *Abraham* did, *Gen.* 18.27. Further conſider, the deſign of Prayer is not to incline God before unwilling, to our mind and deſire; for with him there is no variableneſs nor ſhadow of change; but that we may obtain of him by Prayer what we know afore-hand he is willing to give: Laſtly, conſider we Chriſts example, *Mat.* 26.39. *If it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me, nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt*: This is right praying, to ground our petition upon a promiſe, yet freely to leave all at Gods feet, to diſpoſe of us as he ſees good: This is the third Direction; *Let your Prayers be warranted by the Word.*

Hæc repreſentatio debet eſſe ſubmiſſa & humilis: alias enim non eſſet præcatio religioſa à creatura ſubdita, ad ſupremum Numen & Creatorem directa; ſed, vel imperium ſuperioris erga inferiorem, vel quaſi familiaris colloquutio, qualis eſt inter æquales: Ameſ. *Medull. Theol. lib.* 2. *c.* 9. *p.* 255.

4. Im-

4. Improve your Advocate, *Joh.* 14.13. *Whatſoever you ask in my name, that will I do*: To ask any thing in his name is not, rudely, cuſtomarily, or complementally to conclude with theſe words, *Through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*, &c. but, in confidence of his merit and interceſſion to call upon our heavenly Father, as *Daniel* pleads, *for the Lords ſake*, Dan. 9.17. For, ſince the Fall, none can come immediately to God but through a Mediator; nor are we to fetch a compaſs by the groundleſs invocation of Saints and Angels: I hope you have otherwiſe learned Chriſt: I am moſt afraid in the practick part, that, in particular acts (at leaſt) precious Souls are in danger to miſcarry, eſpecially in Cloſet-Prayer; when a Chriſtian is got alone, and there finds a ſweet gale of the bleſſed Spirit, helping his heart to mourn for ſin, bewail his miſery, plead for mercy, and giving God the glory due unto his name; oh then he goes away much ſatisfied, and God muſt needs accept his perſon and hear his Prayer: Why ſo? Why he hath found abundant aſſiſtance, meltings, quicknings, and inlargements: Alas Sirs, where is Chriſt all this while? I am afraid your advocate is quite forgotten, your ſurety ſet aſide as a poor inſignificant Cypher: And tell me, ſoul, thou that boaſteſt thus of thy inlargements, dareſt thou appear before an holy God in theſe rotten rags? Suppoſe thy rags be Velvet, they are but rags ſtill, and are too ſcant a garment for thy naked ſoul; thou comeſt to unlock the ear of God, and open his heart with a wrong key; we are accepted only in the Beloved, and not becauſe we are inlarged: 'Tis true, evangelical aſſiſtance may be a ſign of acceptance, but 'tis no cauſe thereof: No, no, our perſons and prayers are owned only upon the account of our ſurety and interceſſour: Our dear Lord Jeſus, who dyed for us, he ſits in the Court of Heaven as our Advocate, to plead for us, and ſhall we not imploy our Advocate, and find him work? Or

ſhall

ſhall we think to go on our own errand? Lord, forgive this groſs ingratitude: Oh Chriſtians, whatever your ſtraitneſs or inlargements be, make uſe of him, who is at Gods right hand, lay your ſacrifices on this golden Altar; lay the whole ſtreſs of your acceptance upon Chriſts meritorious interceſſion; act faith on him who mingles his ſweet incenſe with your ſorry performances: Oh look after our *Aaron* who is gone into the Holy of Holies for us: Conſider, friends, it would be ſad with you if you were to be judged according to the beſt ſecret duties that ever you performed: It's good to have an inlarged heart in ſecret, yet there's danger in it, and it may undo us, becauſe our naughty hearts are apt to boaſt of, and truſt to our inlargements; therefore 'tis better for us ſometimes to be ſtraitned than conſtantly inlarged in our Cloſet-Prayers: This is that which hath made ſome ſay that their duties have done them more hurt than their infirmities; and the reaſon is plain, becauſe our corrupt hearts are ſo apt to depend upon the former, when as we are daunted and emptied of our ſelves by conſidering the latter: The Lord help us all in this main buſineſs of Prayer, yea this principal part of our Religion, to depend wholly upon the righteouſneſs and interceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, for acceſs to, and acceptance with God: Study theſe Scriptures, *Joh.* 16.23,24. *Eph.*3.13. *Heb.*4.15,16. 10.19, 20,21,22. *Phil.*3.3,18. The Goſpel is full of this, yea, this is the main hinge of our Religion: you are not Chriſtians, unleſs you make *Jehovah* your righteouſneſs in all you do, as well as God your ultimate end: You'l go away as the proud *Phariſee* without acceptance, if you plead your inlargements with God: but if you come as the *Publican*, pleading only Gods mercy and Chriſts merits, you ſhall be owned and crowned with abundant incomes.

There are alſo ſeveral other neceſſary Ingredients in

all

all prayer, which I might urge with reference to this duty of secret Prayer, as 1. A right understanding, 1 *Cor.* 14. 15. *I will pray with understanding*: For blind devotion is not pleasing to God: 2. A sensible feeling of our wants, we must come weary and heavy laden, *Mat.* 11.28. Pressed with the guilt of sin, pinched with want of grace: 3. Fervency of spirit, *James* 5. 17. arising from a consideration of the necessity and excellency of what we desire, burning zeal: 4. A reverent disposition, *Eccl.* 5. 2. an unfeigned abasing of our selves before him, from the sense of his infinite Majesty and our own indignity: 5. Secret perswasions of prevailing, 1 *Tim.* 2. 8. grounded on Gods All-sufficiency and Fidelity, though the soul be unworthy: 6. A charitable disposition, forgiving others, *Mat.* 6. 14. bearing an endeared affection to all Saints: 7. Perseverance in Prayer, holding on without cessation, *Eph.* 6. 18. Following God in the duty all our dayes: Such as these constitutive ingredients essentially requisite in the duty of Prayer, I might urge, but must contract.

This is the second sort of Directions.

CHAP. VI.

The circumstances of Secret Prayer, opened.

SECT. I.

THe third head of Instructions concerning Closet-Prayer, is the Circumstances that attend it, which may be a great furtherance or hinderance in this performance. These are four.

Referring

Referring either to the
1. *Place.*
2. *Posture.*
3. *Season.*
4. *Voice.*

I shall but briefly touch at these.

1. *For the Place*, I advise you to chuse the most retired room, where you may be freest from disturbance, that you may not hear the noise of the family or distracting commotions of a tumultuous world: be not curious in the choice of a place, so it accomplish your end for secrecy or retirement; no matter how homely it be, the sweetness of the company will compensate the meanness of the place; Lovers care not where they meet, so they may conveniently be together: If you have not a convenient room within doors, yet a good heart will not disdain to go meet its beloved in any coat, or barn, or wood: *Isaac walkt out into the Fields to pray and meditate:* See you chuse a private place wherever it be, according to the nature of the duty, before opened to you; observe God's providence in disposing of you, and accept such place as he shall offer to you.

2. *For Posture*; In general, see that you use an humble gesture, there are examples of several laudable gestures in Prayer; sometimes we find Saints standing, ordinarily kneeling, spreading forth their hands, lifting up their eyes towards Heaven; sometimes prostrating the body all along upon the Earth before the Lord; you may do in this as you find most advantageous in your experience: no universal rules can be given as to these particular circumstances; only see that your Closet-Prayers be with as much reverence as if you were before others, consider, your bodies are Gods, and must be presented as a sacrifice to God: He will be worshipped with the outward as well as inward man; you cannot

not without dangerous ſacriledge rob him of either: Beſides, obſerve it, there is both evidence and aſſiſtance in the bodies humble geſture; it is an help to make you humble, and 'tis a ſign that you are humble: But on the contrary, an unſuitable ſite and poſition of the body in Gods ſervice, is a ſad ſign of an unhumbled ſoul, and hinders humiliation: Therefore though you be never ſo ſolitary, yet remember, your Father in Heaven ſees you. Therefore (as *Cyprian* exhorts) let us conſider we ſtand under the preſence of God, and ſeek to pleaſe the Divine eyes, both in the habit of our body, and manner of our voice: Think of this Rule.

Cogitemus, nos ſub conſpectu Dei ſtare: placendum eſt Divinis oculis & habitu corporis & modo vocis: Cyp. *Serm. in Orat. Dom.* p. 409.

3. *For the Seaſon.* The Apoſtle ſaith, Pray continually, or without ceaſing, yet there are ſome (as it were) canonical hours of Prayer, wherein a Chriſtians diſcretion muſt interpoſe: only in this caſe, take the fitteſt ſeaſons for ſecret Prayer, as when you are moſt at leiſure from worldy buſineſs, moſt free from company, leaſt in danger of drouzineſs: Oh Chriſtians, if it be poſſible, put not off your ſecret devotions too long, till you go to bed; then you are fitter for reſt and ſleep than for wreſtling with God on your knees: And then, for the frequency, no certain rule can be given: *David* and *Daniel prayed three times a day, morning, noon, and night:* Noon time was the ſixth hour, which was alſo a time of Prayer, (*Act.* 10. 9.) others alſo obſerved the ninth hour, which was three a clock in the afternoon, (*Act.* 3. 1.) Certainly the third hour, *i. e.* nine in the morning, was an hour of Prayer, (*Act.* 2. 15.) and ſo was evening, ſix at night, ſay ſome. *David* adds a ſeventh in *Pſal.* 119. 164. *Seven times a day will I praiſe thee,*

Pſal. 55. 17. Dan. 6. 10.

Dr. Ham. *pract. Cat. l.* 3. *Sect.* 2. p. 274.

thee, which may only denote frequency in the duty: Some of these may seem extraordinary cases: The ordinary seasons the Saints have taken, have been Morning and Evening, according to the Jews sacrifice of a Lamb at those seasons. In the morning our spirits are fresh and lively: at evening we may find the by-past matters of the day, a fit occasion for Prayer and Praise: it would do well to take *Isaac*'s season for devotion, even about sun-set, or the shutting in of the day; but I shall not too peremptorily impose in these undetermined circumstances, only take that general rule, 1 *Pet.* 4. 7. *Watch unto Prayer:* That's the third.

Exod. 29. 38, 39. Psal. 5. 3. & 88. 13. & 141. 2.

4 *For the Voice*, The articulate sound of words is not absolutely necessary in Prayer, and it may be not so convenient in Closet-Prayer, which should be managed privately betwixt God and a mans own soul, approving the heart to God as sole witness of his sincerity; except through some extasie and strong motion of the affections, the soul's desires break out in the lips beyond its first intentions: I know, Mr. *John Carter* that eminent man of God, did purposely use his voice in secret Prayer for these two reasons, 1. Because he found it an help to his affections, 2. Because it was an example to his family: I must not therefore lay any necessity in these variable circumstances, only I humbly conceive, it is most suitable to the nature of Closet-Prayer, to perform it so as none else may take notice thereof: Give me leave to mention a few passages out of *Cyprian* to this purpose: 'Tis a token of unmannerly

Mr. *Clark* in his Life.

Nam, ut impudentis est clamoribus strepere, ita contra congruit verecundo modestis precibus orare: Quia Deus non vocis, sed cordis auditor est: Et Paulo post, Quod Anna in primo Regum libro, Ecclesiæ typum portans, custodit & servat: Quæ Dominum non clamosa petitione, sed tacitè & modestè intra ipsas pectoris latebras precabatur: Loquebatur prece occultâ, sed manifesta fide: Cypr. *Serm. de Orat. Dom.* p. 409, 410.

mannerly impudence, to make a noise with loud clamours, but 'tis most suitable to a modest spirit, to pray with silent groans. For God is the hearer not of the voice but of the heart: He makes *Hannah* a type of the Church, who prayed not with clamorous petitions, but with working affections within the lurking holes (as it were) of her breast; she spake with hidden Prayer, but manifest Faith: So he.

Thus much for Circumstances of Closet-Prayer, wherein I am more short and shy in imposing any thing on the people of God, which God hath left free in his Word: Only in general take notice, that though accidental circumstances that concern a duty be mutable, yet by the wise ordering of those circumstances, they will become singular helps in the managing of a duty.

SECT. II.

Duties concomitant to Closet-Prayer.

4. THE last sort of duties and directions concerning Closet-Prayer, are such as are to be practised after the duty is performed, which I call consequent, or concomitant duties. These are four.

Viz.
1. *Observing God's appearances.*
2. *Walking suitably.*
3. *Waiting for returns.*
4. *Communicating experiences.*

1. When you have been before the Lord in Closet-Prayer, observe how God hath been dealing with your hearts, that you may be suitably disposed and affected; If the Lord hath with-drawn himself from you, left you under hardness, deadness, distraction, uncomfortableness;

tableneſs; you are to mourn for it, inquire the cauſe of it, reflect upon your ſelves, ſee what guilt there is upon conſcience, which ſeparates betwixt God and your ſouls: And then (if time permit) fall to't again, lament the ſin; be ingenuous in confeſſion, make ſtronger reſolutions, remove all obſtructions, that God and your ſouls may not be at any diſtance, reckon ſtreight, and make up your accounts, part friends, that you may meet friends the next time you go to him: If you find that God hath helped, melted, and graciouſly manifeſted himſelf to your ſouls, take ſpecial notice of it, record that for time to come, ſlight not the leaſt appearances of God, own him in, praiſe him for theſe ſweet manifeſtations of his love: Learn this leſſon even of *Hagar* the bondwoman: when ſhe was in a ſolitary Wilderneſſe, the Angel of the Lord comforts her, tells her God had heard her affliction, ſhe was with child, her ſeed ſhould be multiplied, ſhe in an anſwerable return to God for his kindneſs, ſets an Aſteriſm of Obſervation upon the place, as a memorial of God's ſeeing, and looking after her, *So the well was called Beer-la-hai-roi, i.e.* the Well of him that liveth, and ſeeth me, *Gen.* 16. 13, 14. Thus do you: think and think again, Oh, who, or what am I, that God ſhould look after me, or take notice of me in this deſolate ſtate and place! I ſhall remember this time of love whileſt I live; in ſuch a room I met with God, ſuch a Chamber or Cloſet was a *Bethel*, a Mount *Nebo*, a Sycomore-tree, where I beheld my *Jeſus*, and took a bleſſed view of the promiſed land.—Thus Chriſtians, reflect upon, and recollect your experiences in Gods preſence; which may be of uſe unto you all your daies.

2. Let your carriages at all times be ſuitable to your Cloſet-prayer; let it appear that you are wholly devoted to God: croſs not your prayers with your practices, pray much and live well: Let it appear you have

have been with God, that you have been drawing your influences from the Spring-head; walk with men as thoſe that walk with God: Let the ſmell and ſavour of your heavenly converſings break forth in your gracious expreſſions, and exemplary converſations: Live not after the ordinary rate of profeſſors: As your heart is God-wards, ſo let your light be Men-wards, that they may ſee your good works, and glorifie God: Carry ſomething out of your Cloſets, that may hold forth the word of life and work of grace; be able to ſay in works what *David* ſpeaks in words, *Pſal.* 119.55,56. After he had ſaid, *He remembred Gods name in the night*, he adds, *This I had becauſe I kept thy precepts*: He tells not what it was, but certainly ſomething it was, worth having: Poſſibly, it was ſome ſtrength to obey the will of God, ſome power over a corruption: Oh Chriſtians, let your actions demonſtrate what you get in Gods preſence: what a ſin and ſhame is it, when perſons do that morally that *Moſes* did literally, Even come down from the mount, and break the Tables of God's Law, as ſoon as they are off the place? Oh how ſad is't for a ſoul to come down from Cloſet-prayer, and be proud, paſſionate, envious, or covetous? And obſerve it; then you are moſt in danger: for then doth *Satan* tempt moſt, and your hearts are then moſt apt to be ſecure, conceited, and carnally confident, as though you had done enough, and might now ſit down and take your eaſe: And having ſweat at duty, and ſuddenly cooling, the gracious ſoul doth contract a dangerous ſurfeit, and fall into a languiſhing condition: Be jealous therefore of your ſelves when you have been with God in ſecret, and have an eye upon the devil, who is like a cheater who ſtrikes in with a young heir, when he hath newly received his rents, and never leaves him till he hath eaſed him of his money: Oh now walk warily and watchfully, conſider where you have been, and

do nothing contrary to your communion or profession: Let it never be said of you as some are apt to say, I wonder what such persons do so much alone! unless they lived better, and carried themselves after another order: they pretend devotion, but there's little seen in their conversation, they will talk as vainly, live as wantonly, be as hard and false in their way of trading, and be as proud, scornful, perfidious and injurious as others are: Ah! Christians, let it never be said thus; at least give no occasion of such speeches: Let the world see, your Prayers have some efficacy; that you get some strength in duties which you lay out in your practices.

SECT. III.

Further duties after Closet-Prayer.

3. ANother duty after you have been with God in secret, is, To expect a seasonable return: Stand upon your watch, hearken what God will speak: *Unto thee*, saith *David*, *will I direct my Prayer, and will look up*, *Psal.* 5. 3. So do you: Christians, look up to see what becomes of your Prayers, observe what answers God gives in. It is an unmannerly mocking another, (*Pilate* like) to ask a question, and expect no answer: and is not this a gross solœcism in Religion, to speak many things to God, and expect no return? 'tis certainly a great fault among Christians, to pray and pray, and never to consider or gather up the fruits of Prayer: Is it not a strange piece of folly, for men to be always sowing, and never to look for an harvest? Surely Christians have more harvests than they are aware of: Therefore, Sirs, observe how you reap, take special notice of any thing that looks like a Return of Prayer; examine it throughly, gather something out of it, catch at what comes from the King of Heaven, as *Benhadad*'s servants did

did by the King of *Israels* words; and if there be but an hint, lay it up, make much of it, improve it, praise God for it, and hope for more: It is the negligence, or unwarrantable modesty of some Christians, to think that they can expect no fruit of their Prayers, because of the imperfection of their duties, forgetting Gods gracious Promise to upright-hearted seekers, by remembring his strict Justice to such as seek him not in the due order: But firs, you must so be humble, as also to believe, so deny your own righteousness, as also to improve Christs intercession, you are to renounce all conceits of merit in your selves, and yet look up for mercy from God. God hath graciously annexed his promise of acceptance to the performance of the condition; and if God have assisted you to pray right for the main, you may expect his audience: for, God is faithful and merciful, both in forgiving our iniquities, and giving us mercies: God's answers are larger than our askings; Instances of this sort are endless: There's never a sincere Prayer lost; God alwayes gives in returns, only we either do not observe, or mistake them, and lose the comfort of them: An Answer of Prayer doth not alwayes come in the way we expect it; we look for it at the fore door, and it comes in at the back-door, and while we are still expecting the friend we look for, he is in the house; the mercy we desired is received, only it comes in a way we thought not of, and are therefore apt to overlook it: Therefore take heed of confining God to your way, or limiting him to your time: That's the third.

1 Joh. 1. 9.
2 Tim. 4. 8.

4. Communicate your experiments: And thereby commend this duty to others: Thus *David*, *Come*, saith he, *and I will declare what he hath done for my soul*; *Psal.* 66. 16. *This poor man cryed, and the Lord heard him*,

him, Psal. 34. 6. ---- Do you as I have done, and you shall speed as I have sped. Do not mistake this: I would not have you tell every one when you go to Closet-Prayer, or when you have been at it, (that's a Pharisaical blowing a Trumpet) but you must, at some times, to such persons as you can confide in, or that you have some grounded hopes of doing good to, tell them your experiences, for their direction and incouragement; in this case, acquaint them how God is wont to deal with your hearts, what good you have found from God in that duty, and you question not but upon a conscientious use thereof they may find the like advantage: And this would be of singular use; for hereby they have not only a rule for it, but the exemplifying of it in a Precedent; and we know Examples are of a prevailing nature. Especially, see that you put your families upon this practice; Oh what a blessed thing were it, if every person in several rooms of the House were at work with God in secret Prayer! How bravely would that house be perfumed? How well would the Trade of godliness thrive? surely such an house were a more blessed beautiful edifice than any Princes Palace under Heaven: It's the disposition of Gospel-penitents to mourn every family apart, husbands and wives apart, *Zech.* 12. 11, 12. And of gracious souls, *to be like Doves of the valleys, every one mourning for his iniquity. Eze.* 7. 16. There must be joynt-Prayers and separated Prayers together and apart: Let not Christians be content to find Christ in a Corner for themselves, but let them do what they can that others also may enjoy him: this was the frame of the Church or believing Soul, *Cant.* 3. 4. *When she had found him, I held him,* saith she, *and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my Mothers house, i. e.* into more publick assemblies: And truly, Christians, that man hath not found Christ at all that would not have

all

all others to find him. Oh, thinks the Chriſtian in his retirement, that others did but feel and enjoy what my ſoul hath ſweet experience of, would to God, my Husband, Wife, Brother, Father, Child, Neighbour, would but try this courſe a while! Oh what advantage would they get by it? Though I eat theſe ſweet morſels alone, yet fain would I have others to partake with me: In things of this world, perſons are apt to grudge others any benefit by what they have ſtoln from others; but in ſpiritual advantages there's no envy, and if there be, it proceeds not from Grace, but from corrupt Nature; the more grace the leſs envy; and when envy is gone, perſons will be communicative. Take away envy, and mine is thine, and thine is mine; true Grace or *Charity is kind, envieth not*, 1 *Cor.* 13.4. Now this I am perſwading to, that they that have found Chriſt would be ſo charitable to ſouls as to communicate the knowledge of him, and the way to enjoy him, unto others: Thus doth *Andrew* come to *Simon*, and *Philip* to *Nathaniel*, and both of them were (as a man finding a Jewel, and cannot contain) overjoyed, and cry out [ἕυρηκα, ἕυρηκα,] I have found him, *We have found the Meſſias*, *Joh.* 1.41.45. And when the poor woman of *Samaria* had been privately converſing with Jeſus, down ſhe threw (at leaſt, left behind her) her water-pot, *and* all in haſte *went to the City, and ſaid to the men, Come ſee a man which told me all things that ever I did, Is not this the Chriſt?* *John* 4.28,29. Thus do you, ſirs: promote and propagate this choice duty, commend it unto others practice; and ſo you may be inſtruments of good.

Tolle invidiam, mea tua ſunt & tua mea.

CHAP. VII.

Concerning the Matter or Words of Prayer.

SECT. I.

THere is one thing yet remains, which it may be expected ſomething ſhould be ſpoken to; and that is, The matter in praying, or words of Prayer, Whether it be lawful or requiſite to uſe a form or no? Moſt judge, that as forms are lawful; ſo preſcript words may be requiſite to ſome young beginners in Religion, and other Chriſtians of weak parts that cannot expreſs their deſires to God in fit words, to help their rudeneſs, yet Chriſtians ought to preſs after more growth and proficiency, that they may lay aſide thoſe Crutches, and arrive at the Gift of Prayer, that may be of ſingular uſe: As for Cloſet-Prayer, Dr. *Hammond* doth aſſert it, that every one may ask his own wants in what form of words he ſhall think fit: And indeed all particular caſes incident, and variable, can ſcarce be comprehended in one conſtant form: beſides, in ſecret Prayer, God doth not ſo much ſtand upon phraſes or pat ſentences, as the workings of the heart in ſighs and groans, which are the beſt Rhetorick in his ears: It's inquired, Whether we may uſe the Lords Prayer? I anſwer, We may uſe it as other prayers in Scripture, either in the very words, or as an example, platform, or directory, according to the contents whereof we muſt direct our prayers.

Videas Ames. Caſ. Conſc. lib. 4. c. 17. p. 190.

Practical Catech. pag. 277.

Therefore for the further help of young profeſſors, I ſhall briefly touch at the ſeveral branches of that admirable

rable compendious rule of Prayer you have in *Mat. 6. ver.* 9. to *v.* 14. And the rather because it may seem to refer chiefly (though not only) to Closet-devotion: what I shall say to it may be a practical analysing of it, in its several parts and branches.

1. For the preface, [*Our Father which art in Heaven,*] You may thus make use of it: Infinite and Eternal Majesty, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, who dwellest in the highest Heavens, and in the lowest hearts, who seest all things here below, and art a God that heares prayers; I a poor worm at thy foot-stool, looking up to the Throne of thy Grace; cast a Fatherly eye upon me, and though I be by Nature a Child of wrath, yet through Jesus Christ make me thy child by Grace and Adoption, teach me to cry *Abba, Father*, with holy reverence and filial confidence, raise my heart to Heaven, beget in me Faith in thy promises, love to my brethren, and due apprehensions of thy Soveraign power, and gracious condescention; that praying by the help of thy Spirit, in the name of thy Son, I may obtain good at thy Fatherly hands. Secondly, for the Petitions.

1. Petition, [*Hallowed be thy Name,*] Thus, O my God, I have dishonoured thee all my days by ignorance, pride, hardness, and unthankfulness, and I am unapt and unable to glorifie thee, but do thou glorifie thy self in my conversion and salvation: help me to know and adore thee, to make an high account of thy titles, attributes, Ordinances; to believe thy word, admire thy works, in mercy or judgment: help me with spiritual thoughts becoming my holy profession, with divine lips speaking good of thy Name, and a suitable conversation, to walk before the Lord: Holy God, destroy Atheism, Ignorance, Idolatry, and Profaneness; magnifie thy Name through the World; and direct and dispose all things to the advancement of thy glo-

ry,

ry, by thy over-ruling providence, and thy infinite wisdom.

2. Petition, [*Thy Kingdom come*:] Thus improve it: Lord, I must confess, that by nature I am dead in sin, and a bond-slave to the Prince of darkness, who rules in my heart, and leads me captive by ignorance, errour, disobedience; but do thou, by the power of thy grace, cast out the strong man, take possession of my heart; sway thy blessed Scepter in me, bring my whole man to obedience, destroy Satans kingdom, propagate the Gospel among all Nations, purge thy house, furnish thy Church with officers, orders, and pure ordinances; make Kings nursing Fathers to it, convert sinners, confirm Saints, comfort the sad; hasten thy second coming to judgment, and the blessed Kingdom of Glory.

3. Petition, [*Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven*:] Thus, Holy Majesty, I acknowledge my natural ignorance of thy will, impotency to obey it, yea, enmity and antipathy against it; my best services are imperfect, my spirit repining under thy hand, and my will wilfully resisting grace, and rushing into sin; but Dear Lord, inform my mind, conquer my will, order my affections sweetly to comply with thy mind; teach me to do thy will in obedience, make me content with thy will concerning me in every providence; beget in me those heavenly dispositions that are in the glorious Angels, and glorified Saints, that with Humility, chearfulness, diligence and faithfulness, zeal, sincerity and constancy, I may be actively and passively at thy dispose.

4. For that Petition, [*Give us this day our daily bread*;] Say in this manner; Heavenly Father, I must confess that by my wretched apostacy in *Adam*, I have lost my right to every morsel of bread, and deserve not to breath in thy air, or tread on thy earth; my sin hath put

put a curse and sting into every comfort, I can obtain nothing by my industrie, yet am prone to desire, get, and use thy mercies unlawfully; thy blessing is only the staff of my bread, help me to wait on thy providence in a moderate use of lawful means; give me a competencie of outward comforts, thy blessing in the use thereof, and contentment therewith; and, above all, a right thereto in Christ, and prevent needlesse cares and sensual delights.

5. As to that Petition, [*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debters*:] Thus plead it, Lord, I am wofully guilty of original and actual sin, and am thereby a debter to divine justice: I owe millions, and cannot pay the least farthing, therefore deserve to be cast into the dark dungeon of eternal torments; but, dear Lord, thou hast found a Ransom who stands in man's stead to be surety for him, O accept me in thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, wash away my sins in his blood, cloath my naked soul with his glorious robes, give me saving faith to embrace him upon his own terms, free my soul from guilt and punishment of sin, pardon my daily failings, and seal an acquittance in my conscience, which tells me I do freely forgive all offences against my self.

6. The last petition, [*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,*] you may render thus: Lord, it were righteous with thee to leave me to be assaulted and conquered by Satan, my souls cruel enemie; my heart is growing wanton, proud, and careless, apt to thrust my self into temptations, but unable to resist or overcome them: thou maist justly bring me into occasions, and leave me to my self therein; but oh my God, keep my soul from being tempted, or assist me in the hour of temptation, or recover me out of my foils and falls; sanctifie my slips, make my standing surer in thy strength, tread Satan under my feet, conquer the world for me, crucifie me unto the world, subdue my flesh within,

within, and in due time take my soul above all sins and snares, into thine immediate presence.

And then shut up all with such like words as these, on that conclusion, [*For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, for ever, Amen*:] Oh my God, I am unworthy thou shouldst grant my petitions for any thing in my self; all my arguments in Prayer, and grounds of acceptance I fetch from thy self: Thou hast a Kingdom of Grace, and Throne of Grace, from whence thou hearest prayers, and dispensest blessings; all the Power is in thine hands, to give and forgive, to kill or make alive, and the Glory shall be thine, if thou hear my Prayer: and blessed be my God, for all my mercies. I ascribe to thee, and thee alone, eternal soveraignty, omnipotency, and glorious excellency, which as I desire all may be given to God, so I am humbly emboldened by Faith to rest upon thy power and promise, that in due time thou wilt hear my requests; And as a token of that my desire and confidence, my soul doth eccho forth, *Amen*, Even so be it.

Thus I have given you an hint from the Lord's Prayer of directions for the matter of our prayers. I shall but propound another Scripture-Instance concerning Arguments in Prayer.

SECT. II.

An Example, from Jacob, *of pleading with God.*

GOD would have his people converse with him in a rational way, and God's children have made use of many pleas in Prayer, which they have produced in vehement Expostulations, as we may find sprinkled up and down in Scripture, as *Moses*, *Nehemiah*, *Ezra*, and *Daniel*, in their approaches to God: and above all, *David* through the book of *Psalms* is exceeding full this way.

way. But I shall pass by the rest, and fix only upon one Scripture instance, and the rather because it was a secret or solitary prayer (of which we are now speaking:) and there are notable Pleas therein, which may possibly suit our condition; therefore I shall briefly touch the parts of it, and recommend it to our imitation: It is that of good *Jacob* (who was trained up in this holy Art of wrestling with God) in *Gen.* 32. 9, 10, 11, 12. His pleas there may be reduced to these ten Heads.

1. He makes use of suitable Titles of God, he calls him Lord or *Jehovah*; which denotes Gods self-existence, and giving Being or existence to the promises, in first making them, and then making them good. Thus do you; Sirs, raise in your hearts suitable apprehensions of God, and let your expressions be answerable; tell God, he is an infinite, omniscient, omnipotent Majesty, able to do beyond what you can ask or think, and that you neither need nor desire any more than what his almighty power can effect: tell him, if All-sufficiency cannot supply you, you are content to go unsped; but you question neither his hand nor heart; you are sure he both can and will help his Children in their need; he will make good with his hand what he hath spoken with his mouth, for he is *Jehovah*.

2. He pleads Covenant-relation to God. O God of my Father *Abraham*, and God of my Father *Isaac*, and so my God! this is an admirable plea, if God own a soul in a Covenant-relation, he will certainly do it good; though his grace be free, yet when God hath chosen a soul to be his, he hath (as it were) ingaged himself to own it; now he hath laid his truth to pledge. Thus then a soul may plead, Lord thou hast been my Father's God, and wilt thou not be my God? And wilt thou be my God, and with-hold such a mercy from me? My Ancestors found grace in thy sight, and obtained those very good things I am craving; and am not I under

der the very same Covenant with them? Are not promises the same? Is there not the same Mediator? Lord, I come to thee in a Covenant-relation for a Covenant-mercy, and wilt thou deny me?

3. He pleads a warrant for his undertaking, appealing to God that he was in his way, saying, *The Lord which saidst unto me, Return into thy Country*: Oh with what incouragement may the soul plead for assistance and protection, that is in Gods way and work, according to his own appointment? Thus then plead, Lord, hast not thou set me about this work? Hast thou not given me a charge to do what I do? Have I not a plain positive Scripture-warrant to bind my conscience? I dare not do otherwise: I may say, If I be deceived, thou hast deceived me, but I am sure, plain Texts are no cheats, I cannot otherwise understand such a Command: and oh my God, since thou hast thus ingaged me in thy work, wilt thou suffer me to miscarry therein?

4. He pleads a particular promise, *I will deal well with thee*: Surely a comprehensive word, containing in it all that *Jacob* wanted. Thus must a Christian search the Scriptures, get hold of a promise, spread it before the Lord, whether for spiritual grace, inward comfort, or outward supply, as thus: Lord, I find a promise in such a place, to a person in my very case, pat and pertinent to my very condition, as if it had been calculated purposely for me in this juncture; now Lord, make it good to my Soul, and Seed; thou hast made it good to others in my state, and why not to me? Am not I an heir of promise? And must not I have a share therein?

5. *Jacob* lays himself under the sense of his own unworthiness, *I am not worthy*, saith he, *of the least of all thy mercies*. This is the property and excellency of a Saint, to nullifie himself, and omnifie God, as I may so say: thus *Abraham* in his pleading calls himself dust and ashes,

shes, and the Centurion judged himself not worthy that Christ should come under his roof. Thus then abase thy self. Lord, I am not worthy to enjoy any common mercy, not fit to lift up mine eyes to thee, less than the least of thy mercies: behold, I am vile, I am not only destitute of merits, but full of demerits. Hell is my desert, I can challenge nothing as mine but sin, and the fruits thereof; Lord, I condemn my self, do not thou condemn me, and cast me from thee.

6. He is affected with Gods faithfulness in the performance of his promises; acknowledging the truth of God shewed to his servant. There is mercy in Gods making a promise to *Abraham*, *Mic.*7.20. truth in making it good to *Jacob*. Well then, with *Jacob*, thus plead: Lord, 'tis true, there was nothing of desert in me to engage thee, either to make or keep thy gracious promise, but sure, the word is gone from thee, yea and notwithstanding all my treachery and unfaithfulness thou hast kept it to this day: Oh keep it still, it depends wholly on thee; let not my vanity alter the course of thy mercy, but pardon and accept as thou hast done from my *Ægypt* untill now.

7. *Jacob* further recounts his former meanness, his low condition: *With my staff I passed over this Jordan*, I came hither in a poor contemptible manner, a sorry pilgrim: Thus do you plead, Truth it is, Lord, thy grace is absolutely free, there was neither wit nor wealth to move thee to do what thou hast done; I can remember the time when I was as sorry and silly a creature, as was in all the Countrey; there was no capacity in me to do thee any remarkable service, thou didst not set thy love upon me for any natural or moral accomplishments, even so Father becaufe it pleased thee: and wilt thou now forsake me? Thou mightest have done that at easier rates.

8. Here's *Jacob*'s Stone of memorial for by-past and pre-

present mercies, *Now*, saith he, *I am become two bands*, i. e. two great companies of wives, children, servants, flocks, herds; I may say, These, where had they been? 'Tis strange to see poor worm *Jacob* thus rich, oh the bounty of God! So do thou say, Lord take notice what thou hast done for me, must all this be in vain? Wilt thou throw away these good things? Wilt thou not rather crown these gifts with continuance of thy kindness? Wilt thou return to do me hurt, after thou hast done me all this good? Dost thou not remember my convictions, consolations; my fears, tears, doubtings, refreshments? Oh the passages of love betwixt thee and me! Shall I be the grave of these mercies? Lord forget me not.

9. Here's his sence of approaching danger, *Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother — for I fear him*, &c. A Brother offended is harder to be won than a strong City. *Jacob's* danger was a spur to his Prayer. A pursued Hart runs fast for shelter; so do thou, Soul, when afraid; fly to the Lord, and say, Oh my God, I have deadly enemies, within, without; my case is forlorn, desperate; I have none to run to, but thy self: Hast not thou said, that *in thee the fatherless find mercy*? Other refuge fails me, no man cares for my soul: Lord relieve, deliver this sinful wretch, else I go down into the pit.

10. Once more, doth *Jacob* plead the promise, and inlarge the granted Charter: *Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the Sea*: Thus do you; still seek out, suck sweetness from, and put in suit the promises by earnest prayer: In this manner; Lord, hast thou not promised an heart of flesh, a broken heart? Why then is my heart hardened from thy fear? Dost not thou say, thou wilt give thy holy Spirit to them that ask it? This Lord, I want, to be a spirit of truth and illumination, a spirit of prayer and supplication, a spirit of grace and sanctification, and of satisfaction;

tisfaction; Oh bestow this mercy upon me: Dost thou not promise to take away my iniquities by pardoning Grace for thine own Name sake? And to subdue my corruption, and increase grace, and bring me to glory? Lord, remember thy word unto thy servant, in which thou hast caused me to trust:

Thus much, for helps in pleading with God, and for that Use of Instruction.

CHAP. VIII.

An Use of Exhortation, urged.

SECT. I.

THE last Use is for Exhortation, to put us on to the performance of this sweet duty of Closet-Prayer: My beloved friends, I beseech you suffer the word of Exhortation: you see the work before you, you see a plain Scripture-warrant for it, you have heard many Instances of Scripture-patterns, you see the manner of the performance; let none now plead ignorance, or look upon it as needless, or make excuses or evasions. Is it not equal and reasonable? Is it not worth the while to converse with your God in a Corner? Look over the reasons of the Doctrine, and see if there be not some weight in them:

But, besides those, I shall propound to you these expostulatory Motives.

1. Would you not be such as make conscience of every commanded duty? You are no real Saints, unless you have respect to all Gods Commandments, *Psal.* 119. 6. If you pick and chuse in your obedience, you are hollow-hearted hypocrites: And can you deny this to be a du-

ty? and will you ſtand dodging with God? Muſt he raze this Sentence out of the Bible, to humour your conceits and ſloth? Is not Cloſet-Prayer a Chriſtian-duty? Dare you argue againſt it? Our of what Topicks will you fetch your Arguments? And do you acknowledge it to be a duty, and will not practiſe it? Your own mouths will condemn you: What needs any more Witneſſes? But if you be real Saints, I dare ſay, you do approve of it; and practiſe it ſometimes; and why are you not conſtant in your obedience? Is it not the property of a Saint to do righteouſneſs at all times? *Pſal.* 106. 3. Oh conſider this, and do not either neglect a command or omit this known duty.

2. Would you not have the truth of grace cleared up in your ſouls? Surely, there's no Chriſtian but would arrive at Aſſurance; and this is one way to evidence ſincerity, being much with God in ſecret duty: As he grieves truly that grieves without witneſs; ſo thoſe religious actings are moſt evidential of grace that are leaſt obvious to the view of men; and whereby a Chriſtian approves his heart, only to the heart-ſearching God: Here's the true *Iſraelite* that can, with *Jacob*, converſe with God alone, and ſeeks his praiſe, not of men, but of God: Obſerve it, a Chriſtian ordinarily hath not that comfort in a duty expoſed to others view, which he hath in that he performs betwixt God and his own Soul: For, there's moſt danger of ſelfiſhneſs in the former, and more ſelf-denial in the latter: The wind of applauſe may blow men far in a creditable performance, but humility and ſincerity is moſt evident in ſecret appeals to God: Conſider this, Chriſtians, you run to Sermons, Miniſters, good Books, and take much pains to try your ſtate by marks and ſigns, make tryal of this more compendious courſe to clear your ſtate; be much with God in Cloſet-Prayer.

Ille dolet vere qui ſine teſte dolet.

Rom. 2. 28.

3. Would

3. Would you not be found in the practice of the power of godlineſs? Oh then fall cloſe to Cloſet-Prayer: Alas, ſirs, hearing Sermons, reading Scriptures, diſcourſing religiouſly, praying in the family, may be done only for faſhion ſake, and the perſon that doth them, may have no more than the form of godlineſs: Miſtake me not, I do not condemn the practice of theſe, nor them that do them, as Formaliſts for that: God forbid, they are Scripture duties, but the outward part of theſe may be done without the power of godlineſs, but to ſtruggle with a man's own heart, to wreſtle with God in a Corner, to meditate and give up a mans ſelf to theſe duties, as in the preſence of God; oh, this ſhews ſomething of the power of grace, and life of holineſs. This is heart-work, and that's hard work, coſtly duties, ſpiritual exerciſes, which is more than to offer God thouſands of Rams, or a firſt-born Son: *David* would not offer that to God that coſt him nothing; and ſhall we be content with the ordinary duties which may be conſiſtent with an eaſie plodding formality?

4. Would you not have your hearts eaſed under preſſing burdens? Are you in love with your ſorrows? would you not be rid of them? Behold, I ſhew unto you an excellent way to get eaſe, which is a recourſe to God in ſecret Prayer! I have heard ſome precious Chriſtians ſay, that when any thing hath lyen upon their hearts, ready to overwhelm them, they have run to God in a corner, and there have left their load, and thence have gone, with good *Hannah*, and have been no more ſad: And experience tells us, that when any preſſing affliction lies upon us, if we can unboſom our ſelves to an intimate friend, though not a word of counſel or comfort paſs from him; yet that opening of our hearts doth eaſe, as vomiting doth an oppreſſed ſtomach. And hence ſaith *Job*, *I will ſpeak that I may be refreſhed*: And Scripture backs this, in *Phil.* 4.6. *Be careful in nothing,*

but in every thing make your requests known to God, and unload your cares and fears into the bosom of God: but how? Why, by *Prayer and Supplication in Thanksgiving*: lay your load on God by Prayer, and he will bear it.

5. Would you not obtain boldness in access to God, and familiarity with him? Oh, go often to God in Closet-Prayer. Princes take more state upon them when conversing with their favourites before others, but when none are present, they open their hearts more familiarly to them. I know *Abraham*, saith God, he and I are well acquainted, he is my Friend, he visits me often, and *shall I hide any thing from Abraham*? I'll take him to a side, and tell him my whole heart; so will God to you, he will communicate much to you, and you may say any thing to him, you are not strangers to him, but may come into his presence boldly, and he will make you welcom, *Heb.* 4. 16. On the contrary, what a dreadful thing will it be to have strange thoughts of God in duty, or at death? strangeness betwixt God and a soul is a sad uncomfortable thing: Wicked men are total strangers to God: gracious souls little imployed in secret prayer, are little acquainted with God, and worship afar off; but sincere souls conversing much with God in secret, attain to abundance of intimacy with the Lord: and is not that a mercy worth a World?

6. Would you not have the sins of others to bring wrath and judgment on the place? Oh then, let your souls weep and pray in secret places, as *Jeremiah* did, *Chap.* 13. 17. This is the last and safest way to be delivered from the guilt of open crying sins in the Land, even a mourning for them in prayer before the Lord: thus did *Lot*, and *David*, *Paul*, and all Saints: Yea *Moses*'s solitary prayer interposed betwixt flaming wrath, and offending *Israel*: thus did he stand in the gap, and you may make an attonement for the Nation: a gift in secret may pacifie that wrath that's already broken out against

againſt us. Wicked men ſin in ſecret, let us mourn in ſecret; yea they ſin openly, let us lament privately. The truth is, ſecret ſins may undo a Nation, except the cry of the Saints ſecret prayers be louder than the cry of wicked mens ſecret ſins: Oh fall to it. *Ariſe, cry out in the night, in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord* — Lam. 2. 19. 2 Kings 17. 9.

7. Would you not have your own ſecret ſins ſet in the light of God's countenance? *Pſal.* 90. 8. then repent and pray alone, humble your ſouls in ſecret for your ſecret ſins. Are you not conſcious to your ſelves of much ſecret guilt? And doth not God expect that you ſhould ſet your ſelves to mourn over them, and cry to God for pardoning grace in ſecret? Do you not know that God will bring every ſecret thing to light in the great day of accounts? Nay, God may puniſh you openly, as he did *David* for his ſecret ſin. Well then, anticipate that ſad ſevere judgment, by judging your ſelves, and deprecating his righteous judgment: I may ſay to thee, Soul, as *Solomon* beſpeaks *Shimei*, Thou knoweſt all the wickedneſs which thy heart is privy to: and where are thy prayers, and tears, and groanings in ſecret? Oh, ſirs, if others ſins draw you not to ſecret Prayer, let your own, which may afford matter of abundant grief in your Cloſets and retirement. Eccl. 12. 13. 2 Sam. 12. 12.

8. Would you not prevent and circumvent wicked mens ſecret plots? Be ſure then, you undermine them by ſecret Prayer. *Wicked men lye in wait ſecretly as a Lyon in his den, to catch the poor and murder the innocent*, Pſal. 10. 8, 9. And now what courſe is to be taken for preventing theſe horrid deſigns? Alas, we have no other remedy, but the ancient Chriſtians weapons, Prayers and Tears; theſe may break their nets, and blunt their weapons; Pſal. 64. 1, 2, 4, 5.

good *Jeremiah* knew not that they had deviſed devices againſt him, but he reveals his cauſe to God in prayer, and then God ſhews him their doings, and prevents their atempts, *Jer.* 11. 18, 19, 20. Saints Cloſet-prayers may break wicked mens Cloſet-plots: Fall cloſe then to this great duty.

9. Would you not be condemned by the Heathens Chamber-Idolatry? Oh then, do you perform Chamber and Cloſet-Duties: They had their [*Divos penetrales*, or *Penates*] their Houſhould-gods, and Cloſet-images, they had their [*opertanea*, and *tenebroſa ſacra*] their covered, vailed, and myſterious exerciſes in ſecret places: And the *Jews* borrowed ſeveral myſtical rites of the *Heathens*: hence we read in *Ezek.* 8. 12. of *Chambers of Imagery*, as the *Papiſts* at this day have their Crucifixes, their petty-Chamber, Cloſet-deities, where they drop their Beads, and do homage to their Idols: and ſhall theſe in their blind ſuperſtition condemn our irreligion? Shall it be ſaid of a devour Philoſopher, that in ſo many years he ſpoke more with the gods than with men? And ſhall it be ſaid of any of us, that God (even the true God) is not in all our thoughts? or ſo little in our lips; at leaſt, in ſecret ſolemn addreſſes to him? Let not poor ignorant *Papiſts* out-ſtrip us in Devotion: Since there is ſuch vaſt difference.

10. Would you not be ſuitable to Gods diſpenſations? When the Lord our God puts us to ſilence, and into ſolitary places, he expects that we ſhould viſit him there: *Cant.* 2. 14. *Oh my Dove that art in the clefts of the rock, in the ſecret place of the ſtairs, i. e.* in an afflicted perſecuted and deſolate condition, *Let me ſee thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, i. e.* in the duties of Prayer, praiſe, and Goſpel-Ordinances: *For then was her voice ſweet, and countenance comely*; when they are caſt out, then doth God expect and entertain them: And this advantage have Gods children had by privacy, into which

which they were caſt, as we heard before of *Jerimiah*, *Chap.* 15. 15. So the afflicted Church, *Lam.* 3. 28, 29. When ſhe ſitteth alone in ſolitarineſs, then ſhe putteth her mouth in the duſt, in faſting and prayer; and ſo a particular perſon, as there: Now a man is at leiſure for it: While perſons have their full imployment or enjoyments, they are too buſie; but when perſons are taken off other wayes, 'tis time to retire themſelves and retreat to God: The leſs comfort perſons find in publick Ordinances, the more ſerious muſt they be in Cloſet-performances; that the loſs may be ſupplied ſome way.

SECT. II.

Several Objections, anſwered.

'TIs ſtrange if our carnal hearts and cavilling ſpirits have not ſomething to ſay againſt this difficult duty: I ſhall therefore mention what Objections, I can foreſee may be made, and briefly anſwer them.

1. *Obj.* We pray in our families, and is not that enough? What needs all this ado?

Anſw. 1. This Objection cannot be made by all: ſome have no families to pray with, but if thou doſt pray in thy family, 'tis well; there's many graceleſs heads and prayerleſs houſes: Of which it may be ſaid, The fear of God is not in this place: Oh the wrath that ſhall be poured out on ſuch Families: But ſuppoſe thou doſt, Family prayer is one thing, and Cloſet-prayer is another: and let me tell thee, God never made one duty to ſuperſede another; you muſt not juſtle out one work, becauſe you are bound to perform another. Every thing is beautiful in its place and ſeaſon. Gods Commandments are exceeding broad, and take in a great compaſs of duties. You muſt worſhip God in your Houſes; that exempts you not from worſhipping God

in your Closets, no more than in the publick Assemblies: There's equal commands for all, necessity of all; neglect any at your peril: Besides, I told you, a Child of God hath a secret errand to his Father, that it is not fit his family should know of; and upon this account God hath appointed Closet-Prayer, as tendering the credit of his people, that they might not discover their spiritual nakedness to any but to that God who knows their secrets, and will keep their counsel: And I must tell thee, Soul, thou art very little sensible of thy spiritual state or wants, if thou have nothing to say to God that thou wouldst not have others to hear.

2. *Obj.* But I am a poor man, and busie in my calling, and cannot take so much time in Closet-Prayer, I have other occasions.

Answ. Friend, hast thou any greater business than the affairs of thy soul; let thy calling stand still rather than thy soul should be damned: Cursed be those occasions that eat out Religion: But consider, you may follow both callings, if you be observant; our general and particular callings must not interfere. Clean creatures divided the hoof, considerate Christians are such as rightly proportion works to their particular seasons. A chief part of *David's* Arithmetick of numbring daies, was in that which we call Division, to cast the account of this our short life, so as to divide the little total sum thereof into the several portions of time due for performing every duty in: The hand-maid may not thrust out the Mistress; nor the Shop have all and Chamber none of our time: You are flat *Atheists*, if you think Praying will hinder your work: No, no, it blesseth and expediteth temporal affairs. We use to say, Meat and Mattins hinder no work. Canst thou not get time for eating, sleeping, ? Yea, dost thou not spend as much time in idleness, and vain discourse,

Nobis pietate peculia crescunt. Mant.

morning Pray or at 3 a clock

courſe, as would be required every day for this duty? If thou hadſt an honeſt heart, thou wouldſt redeem time from thy meat, or ſleep, or recreations, for Prayer, rather than neglect a duty, or damn thy ſoul: The truth is, we complain we want time, but we waſte time: There's not the pooreſt Labourer, but he miſ-ſpends more time than Prayer-time comes to: And why ſhould any water be left off, when there's little enough in the channel to turn the Mill for, or towards our God?

3. *Obj.* But I am a Servant, and muſt obey my Maſter; I am kept too hardly at work, to get time for ſecret Prayer; I am called to work betimes, dogged to it all the day.

Anſw. Though you be ſervants to do mens work, yet not ſlaves to their luſts: in that reſpect you muſt not be the Servants of Men; if you be Servants, you are the Lords Free-men, if free, yet you are Chriſts ſervants, 1 *Cor.* 7. 22, 23. Remember, you have a Maſter, in Heaven; no mortal creature can diſcharge you from your attendance on God: You muſt do Gods work as well as your Maſters, and your Maſters work for God's ſake. Oh ſirs, Eph. 6. 6, 7. do not neglect your duty to God, to pleaſure men. Can your Superiour anſwer for your neglect? Or interpoſe betwixt flaming wrath and your ſinning ſouls? But I am afraid, ſome lay the blame on Maſters, when the fault is in themſelves: Deceive not thy ſelf by accuſing others to clear thy ſelf; this was *Adam*'s fault: Think not that anothers rigour can excuſe thy neglect: Let me tell you, there's never a ſervant ſo ſtrictly watch'd, but might ſteal ſome time from his Maſter for his God; and yet do him no wrong: Only ſee that you be prudent in chuſing ſuch ſeaſons as may not juſtly provoke your Maſter or prejudice his occaſions: And be often in your callings lifting up your hearts to God; be content with your condition:

dition: had you more liberty, it may be your hearts would not be in so good a frame: But let me bespeak Masters indulgence to poor and pious Servants; oh hinder them not in any good work, rather put them upon it, encourage them in it, bless God that you have praying servants, this is a hopeful presage of good success: Let not your servants fare the worse, but the better, for being God's servants.

4. *Obj.* But I have no Closet to pray in, no convenient room for secret Prayer; I have a little house, a busie full family, and cannot retire my self.

Answ. A good Heart will find room, either within doors, or without: a gracious soul will seek out places to pray in; any sorry cote will be a *Bethel*, where it can enjoy its God: or, if he cannot get to it under the roof, he will (with good *Isaac*) walk out into the Fields to meditate, and to pray: Could Heathens and Idolatrous Jews plant Groves for their Superstition, in an Apish imitation of *Abraham*'s practice? And cannot a Bird of Paradise take its flight out of some Wood or Arbour into Heaven? But, most, need not make this silly slight excuse; they have good roofs to be in, and need not worship God [*sub Dio*] in the open air: few of us but we have convenient rooms, but most of us want affectionate hearts to visit God therein: But, Christians, make good use of your Houses to serve God therein, else they may justly spew you out, and leave you harbourless; and then, what a dreadful sting and guilt will follow you whither-soever you go? Oh consider *London*'s flames and ruines; your houses are no better built, nor more secured from the like Catastrophe: do not weaken their foundations by wilful neglects, or scandalous sins.

5. *Obj.* But I know some good Christians that never use it, yea, that maintain it in their judgments that it is not necessary, except in some extraordinary cases; What say you to that?

I *Anſw.* I never yet met with ſuch perſons that had the face of Religion, that ever ſpoke againſt the ordinary practice of this duty of Cloſet-Prayer. I confeſs, I have met with ſome, who being urged to Family-Prayer, have put it off with this evaſion, that they would pray in their Cloſets, (how well, the God of Heaven knows.) But if any profeſſors judgement be ſo far bribed to plead for the fleſh in this neglect, the Lord rebuke them, and forgive them, they know not what they ſay. This is a lamentation, that there's ſcarce any truth ſo ſacred, or duty ſo ſpiritual, but it hath been contradicted in theſe licentious daies: Some have pleaded againſt Family-Prayer, Catechiſing, Chriſtian-meetings, and what not; But they can produce no ſolid arguments: do not you follow their example contrary to plain Scripture precepts, and preſidents. Many were produced for confirmation, moſt whereof were not only in extraordinary caſes, but were an ordinary practice: And can you find the day that affords not ſome ſpecial matter to occaſion you to make addreſſes to God in ſecret Prayer? If you be ſenſible and obſervant, ſurely you will ſee great need for ſuch retirements in ordinary practice. Remember this, that you follow no man, but as he follows Chriſt: but I am ſure our precious Saviour uſed this practice.

SECT. III.

More Objections, anſwered.

6. *Obj.* BUT I find not my heart affected or prepared: Is it not a tempting of God, to go when the Spirit doth not move me?

I *Anſw.* 'Tis a dangerous miſtake to think you may not go to duty, but when the Spirit moves you: For it may be long before it ſtir; the Spirit bloweth where, and

and when it listeth: You are therefore to lay your selves in the way of the Spirit, call in its aid, which ordinarily comes when souls do their duty: Holy performances are (as it were) the walk of the Spirit, the air where he breaths: and be sure he is most likely to be found in his own way, and walk; but you cannot expect him in the neglect of plain duty: Try this way, put God to't, plead his promise, you cannot think to be warm, if you run from the fire: If you have not an appetite to pray, you must pray for an appetite; for neglect, or omission of a duty, never fits, but alwaies unfits for a duty: If you'll heed your trifling spirits, and accept every excuse which they make, you shall never pray: If you play the truant one time, you'll have less mind to go to God the next time; guilt makes you afraid, and you dare not come near that God whom you have wronged; as *Adam* run from God, and *Peter* would thrust Christ from him, when conscious of guilt. How dare you look God in the face, whom you have slighted? Besides, you'll find that neglect of duty, doth not make the next performance more easie, but more difficult. It will (as one saith) require more time and pains for you to tune your Instrument, than for another to play his lesson: And is it not more likely God should come to you in pains-taking, than total omission? Do you not read in the *Psalms*, how often *David* begun faintly, and ended triumphantly? Try the Lord, and see if he be not better than you expect.

7. *Obj.* I, but (saith a poor soul) I meet with temptations when I go to God in secret; Satan assaults me, I am timorous, and dare not be alone, or in the dark, but am affrighted.

Answ. 'Tis a sign the duty is good, because so bad a spirit opposeth it: the more Satan seeks a duty is for the souls advantage, the more diligent he is to hinder the performance; but must Satan be gratified rather than God

God glorified, or thy ſoul edified? Wilt thou give way to him? Reſiſt the Devil, and he will flee from thee: think not thou canſt perform a fleſh-diſpleaſing duty, when Satan is quiet, and doth not moleſt; he will be buſie to tempt when thou art going to thy God; this is no new thing, he will jog thy hand when thou art writing thy letter to thy Friend in heaven: think not to be more exempted than even thy Saviour himſelf, he was ſet upon by the Devil in his ſolitary receſſes in the wilderneſs! and, oh the horrible nature of thoſe temptations! *Mat.* 4. When *Joſhua* the High-prieſt prayed, Satan *ſtood at his right hand to reſiſt him*, but the iſſue was good, *God rebuk'd him*, *Zech.* 3. 1, 2. And thus he will do for thee, he will tread Satan under thy feet, and make thee a conqueror; only when thou art annoyed with this foul ſpirit, turn to thy God, leave not thy work, let not Satan take thee off duty; then he hath attained his end: fall cloſer to the work; conſider, faſting and prayer caſt out the devil; watching and prayer are preverſatives from infection, yea, Prayer it ſelf is a chief piece of a Chriſtians Armour: if you be beat off this, you are routed; this ingageth God for you: without this, you are but like other men, and the *Philiſtins* will put out your eyes, lead you captive, and make ſport of you: ſtick cloſe to this whatever you do; though all the devils in hell roar upon you, yet run to your God in Prayer, they are ſluggards, or cowards, that ſay there's a Lion in the way, when they are called out to hard ſervice, or difficult duty; nay, rather ſay as he once in an arduous undertaking, Here's a work fit for the ſpirit of an *Alexander*; ſo, here's a duty that becomes a Chriſtian to manage: By your God you may run through a Troop, and leap over a Wall. But more of that anon.

Matt. 26. 4. Eph. 6. 18.

8. *Obj.* But I get no good by Cloſet-Prayer, I have uſed it ſo long, and ſtill my heart is as cold, hard, dead, as ever; I will give over now. *Anſ.*

Answ. Is not this too like the language of those that say, *It is in vain to serve God? Mal.*3.14. And are you like those Atheists, that think Prayer is to no purpose? I hope not: You think it doth good to some, but not to you. Well, what's the reason? Is it not because you do not pray aright? Therefore search your selves, see how you prayed, mourn over your defects, and mend the matter: It's true, one who sees the Well dry, breaks, or throws away his Pitcher; but, Is God a barren wilderness? Is it not good for you to draw near to God? Were they ever ashamed that waited on him? Hast not thou sometimes found benefit by secret Prayer? God is good to the soul that seeks him: try again, you will not lose your labour; be not weary of well doing, in due time you shall reap, if you faint not; let not your hands hang down, let not your knees grow feeble; the Text tells you, *your Father that sees in secret will reward you openly*, and dare you not trust him beyond sense and experience? There may be more advantage by this duty, than you are aware of, you shall not yet know the profit you have by secret Prayer, you must keep on in a patient continuance in well-doing, and not give over till you receive a full reward; but oh take heed of giving over prayer, because you think you want present profit: You cannot do Satan greater service, or your souls more prejudice: But more of this anon.

9. *Obj.* But I am weak in parts, and know not what to say; Fain I would, but alas I cannot open my wants to God in Prayer, I want gifts, abilities.

Answ. I am glad to hear thee thus complain: thou art fitter for praying, when thou canst lie under the sense of thy inability to pray, that's an useful disposition in duty: But thou saist thou canst not pray, then I'll tell thee what to do; go thy waies alone, and fall down upon thy knees, and plainly tell the Lord thou canst not pray, and intreat him to help thee by his blessed

ſed Spirit, which he hath promiſed to them that ask it: tell the Lord, that thou canſt not think a good thought, or ſpeak a good word without that bleſſed Spirit, but it ſhall help thine infirmities, and teach thee what to ſay: oh beg hard for that holy Spirit; and then, let ſome means be uſed to get matter of Prayer: you know it conſiſts of confeſſion of ſin, petition for good things, deprecation of evil, and thankſgiving for mercies: Well then, ſit down, and think with thy ſelf, what ſins thou art guilty of; original, or actual; of omiſſion, or commiſſion; this is too too fruitful a ſubject: take them home, tell God of them, by ingenious confeſſion: Then bethink thy ſelf what thou wanteſt at the hands of God, as Pardon, Grace, Peace, Heaven, and begg theſe; conſider alſo what thou art afraid of, as guilt, ſtrength, effects of ſin, Gods wrath, Satans malice; and deſire the Lord to prevent, and remove theſe, for Chriſt's ſake: And laſtly, recollect what mercies thou haſt had from God, and reckon them up to God, with expreſſions of thankfulneſs: Do this with plainneſs, and ſeriouſneſs; heed not ſo much for exact method, or fine phraſes: the gilt of the Key makes it not open the door a jot the better; and a Prayer doth not work upon God the rather becauſe of the neat language therein, but unboſome thy ſelf plainly, and ſeriouſly before thy God, and thou ſhalt find preſent aſſiſtance and acceptance, and future inlargement and incouragement: Be honeſt, though never ſo homely in Prayer.

10. *Obj.* But I like not this ſtir, it's an hard and difficult work, I would rather do any thing than this, my ſpirit is wonderful averſe to it; ſay what you will, it will not down with me, to make all this ado in Cloſet-Prayer; it's pretty fair if I can keep up ſuch duties as Church and Family require.

Anſw. This is the pleading of fleſh and blood, this is the bottom of the former Objections, I expected this all along:

along: if the tongue speak not thus, the heart doth: let a duty be pressed never so home, a carnal heart will make some evasions; though the mouth be stopped, yet a cavilling heart will have something to say against a spiritual duty: And if it cannot be mad with reason, it grows mad without reason, and against Scripture: 'Tis easier to bring arguments to convince the judgment, than to draw the will and affections to a through obedience: But soul, wilt thou plead for *Baal*? Wilt thou take the devils part, and yield to carnal reason? or wilt thou baulk any divine commands to gratifie a lazie humour, or a base lust? God forbid; methinks, if thou canst not obey as thou ought'st, yet thou should'st take God's part, and plead for obedience: *Paul* doth so, *Rom.* 7. 15, 16. Though he saith, *What I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that do I* — (yet saith he) *I consent to the Law that it is good*: *i. e.* I take part with God, and joyn with Gods will against my corrupt and carnal affections, that would draw my neck from under this heavenly yoke: And if you have not something within you that takes part with Gods revealed will, you are not of God: But a principle of grace doth facilitate and make easie the hardest duties, because there is a likeness betwixt holy hearts and holy performances: Love makes every thing easie; hence it comes to pass that Christs yoke is easie, *Mat.* 11. 30. His ways pleasant, and his commandments not grievous, 1 *Joh.* 5. 3. If thy heart were right, duties would be sweet to thy soul; 'tis no burden to eat, drink, sleep; the acts of nature are delightful to persons in a right temper, if they be not, nature is oppress, and out of order: A child of God in duty, so far as regenerated, is like a man in his calling, or a creature in its proper Element: Besides, wert thou more accustomed to duty in secret, it would be more familiar to thee, and less irksom: We see by experience, Use makes heavy things light, we hardly feel the weight of

our

our cloaths, becauſe fitted to us, and conſtantly carried by us, when as the ſame weight upon our ſhoulders would trouble us: Chriſtians, conſider, all Chriſtian duties are not of equal difficulty; yet withal obſerve it, Duties that are hardeſt to go through, many times bring in the ſweeteſt income: And ſo is this; the profit of it will abundantly recompenſe for your pains in it: Be ſure when a duty is lined with difficulty, and your corrupt hearts draw back, and have moſt averſeneſs to it, there is ſomething of God in that duty, and God aims you more than ordinary advantage by it: Therefore do not ſay a word againſt it, but ſtir up your ſelves, ſpur on your hearts, ſhake off ſloth, and run to God, whatever Satan, the World, or Fleſh ſay to the contrary: Thus much for the Objections.

SECT. V.

Some Caſes of Conſcience, briefly anſwered.

THere are yet four Caſes of conſcience I ſhall briefly propound and Anſwer.

1. *Caſe.* Whether may not an hypocrite or graceleſs ſoul perform this duty of Cloſet-Prayer; and what difference is there betwixt a real Saint and an unregenerate perſon in this work?

1 *Anſ.* It is poſſible a carnal man may pray in ſecret, but with theſe differences: 1. He is urged to it by the challenges of an accuſing conſcience, he is (as it were) dogg'd to't, he dare not but do it; but a Child of God hath a gracious principle, inclining him to it, from love to God, and a deſire to pleaſe and enjoy him: Yet through the remainders of corruption, there's much unwillingneſs in the beſt; ſo that ſometimes a Saint muſt even force himſelf to the performance.

2. An hypocrite will not thus pray always, *Job* 27. 9, 10.

along: if the tongue ſpeak not thus, the heart doth: let a duty be preſſed never ſo home, a carnal heart will make ſome evaſions; though the mouth be ſtopped, yet a cavilling heart will have ſomething to ſay againſt a ſpiritual duty: And if it cannot be mad with reaſon, it grows mad without reaſon, and againſt Scripture: 'Tis eaſier to bring arguments to convince the judgment, than to draw the will and affections to a through obedience: But ſoul, wilt thou plead for *Baal*? Wilt thou take the devils part, and yield to carnal reaſon? or wilt thou baulk any divine commands to gratifie a lazie humour, or a baſe luſt? God forbid; methinks, if thou canſt not obey as thou ought'ſt, yet thou ſhould'ſt take God's part, and plead for obedience: *Paul* doth ſo, *Rom.* 7. 15, 16. Though he ſaith, *What I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that do I* — (yet ſaith he) *I conſent to the Law that it is good*: *i. e.* I take part with God, and joyn with Gods will againſt my corrupt and carnal affections, that would draw my neck from under this heavenly yoke: And if you have not ſomething within you that takes part with Gods revealed will, you are not of God: But a principle of grace doth facilitate and make eaſie the hardeſt duties, becauſe there is a likeneſs betwixt holy hearts and holy performances: Love makes every thing eaſie; hence it comes to paſs that Chriſts yoke is eaſie, *Mat.* 11. 30. His ways pleaſant, and his commandments not grievous, 1 *Joh.* 5. 3. If thy heart were right, duties would be ſweet to thy ſoul; 'tis no burden to eat, drink, ſleep; the acts of nature are delightful to perſons in a right temper, if they be not, nature is oppreſt, and out of order: A child of God in duty, ſo far as regenerated, is like a man in his calling, or a creature in its proper Element: Beſides, wert thou more accuſtomed to duty in ſecret, it would be more familiar to thee, and leſs irkſom: We ſee by experience, Uſe makes heavy things light, we hardly feel the weight of

our

our cloaths, becauſe fitted to us, and conſtantly carried by us, when as the ſame weight upon our ſhoulders would trouble us: Chriſtians, conſider, all Chriſtian duties are not of equal difficulty; yet withal obſerve it, Duties that are hardeſt to go through, many times bring in the ſweeteſt income: And ſo is this; the profit of it will abundantly recompenſe for your pains in it: Be ſure when a duty is lined with difficulty, and your corrupt hearts draw back, and have moſt averſeneſs to it, there is ſomething of God in that duty, and God aims you more than ordinary advantage by it: Therefore do not ſay a word againſt it, but ſtir up your ſelves, ſpur on your hearts, ſhake off ſloth, and run to God, whatever Satan, the World, or Fleſh ſay to the contrary: Thus much for the Objections.

SECT. V.

Some Caſes of Conſcience, briefly anſwered.

THere are yet four Caſes of conſcience I ſhall briefly propound and Anſwer.

1. *Caſe.* Whether may not an hypocrite or graceleſs ſoul perform this duty of Cloſet-Prayer; and what difference is there betwixt a real Saint and an unregenerate perſon in this work?

1 *Anſ.* It is poſſible a carnal man may pray in ſecret, but with theſe differences: 1. He is urged to it by the challenges of an accuſing conſcience, he is (as it were) dogg'd to't, he dare not but do it; but a Child of God hath a gracious principle, inclining him to it, from love to God, and a deſire to pleaſe and enjoy him: Yet through the remainders of corruption, there's much unwillingneſs in the beſt; ſo that ſometimes a Saint muſt even force himſelf to the performance.

2. An hypocrite will not thus pray always, *Job* 27. 9, 10.

9, 10. 'Tis but in some pang, or under some pressing affliction; and when this good mood is over, he takes his leave of God, 'till whipt to him again by the like: But a child of God is in some measure constant and diligent in the duty, though he may have sinful omissions and intermissions, yet never a total cessation from duty. Grace works the heart God-ward, and the soul is not content without Him.

3. An hypocrite doth not make conscience to get his heart up to God in the duty, he is content with the work done, words said; but a real Saint hath most ado with his heart, that's the hardest piece of the work; he dare not leave that behind him, and he hath much ado to get it up.

4. A carnal man keeps his round in formal duty, but gets nothing; he prays to little profit or purpose, and indeed doth not much study to gain a spiritual good: But a child of God is a great gainer, he gets at some times communion with God, communications from God: Oh what good doth his soul meet with! Though not always, yet at some times.

2. *Case.* Whether may a Christian bind himself to the performance of this duty of Closet-Prayer at stated times? Or, suppose a Christian miss his times designed for that work, what must he then do?

Ans. To the former; that in general thou mayst and must swear and vow that thou wilt keep Gods Commandments, *Psal.* 119. 106. so doth *David.* And in Scripture we are bid to make vows, and pay them to the Lord, *Psal.* 76. 11. Vowing our selves and all that we have to God, is necessary: Sequestring some part of our time to his service, is requisite: And in some cases for some persons, it may be expedient to bind and task our selves by an holy resolution, to take so much time at least every day for Gods worship, yea at such a time as may be judged most commodious by our experiences.

And

And this may be a good help to keep in our treacherous hearts from delay or dallying: But to ingage our ſelves to a particular hour ſo punctually, and unalterably, as not to take another, may not be ſo ſafe; partly, becauſe our times are in Gods hands, and we know not what intervening Providence may fall in to prevent our performance, whereby conſcience may be intangled in a perplexing labyrinth; beſides, our outward occaſions, and the frame of our ſpirits, may diſcover a greater fitneſs at another ſeaſon: Yet, though I would not have Chriſtians bring a ſnare upon their ſouls by Vowing, yet I humbly conceive that they may conſult conveniences and deſign ſome time for that work and purpoſe, God willing, to keep an hour of Prayer: And if they be hindred by a journey, or any unexpected unavoidable occaſions, they muſt mourn for it as their burden, redouble their diligence another time, not plead needleſs diverſions, lift up ejaculations to God, keep a praying frame of ſpirit, and God will graciouſly Pardon and entertain them.

3. *Caſe.* How may a Chriſtian know that he enjoyeth communion with God in Cloſet-prayer?

Anſ. Communion with God is twofold. 1. As to Graces, 2. As to Comforts. Sometimes a Chriſtian may feel the joy of Gods ſalvation, have the ſweet kiſſes of his mouth, ſmiles of his face, ſeals of his Spirit, and the lively ſpringings of joy and raviſhing pleaſures; theſe carry their own evidence along with them: But all have not theſe, nor any at all times; therefore the ſureſt way is to inquire after communion with God, with reference to the exerciſe of grace in duty: then hath a child of God true fellowſhip with God, when by the ſweet aſſiſtance of Gods Spirit his mind is knit to the object of worſhip, the underſtanding is fruitful in ſpiritual and ſuitable thoughts, when the will and affections are carried out in ſtrong and panting deſires and longings

after God: When the heart is throughly broken in the ſenſe of ſin, melted into godly ſorrow, affected with the ſweetneſs of pardoning grace, and ardently pleads with God for acceptance; again, when the graces of the Spirit are acted in the duty, as, an holy awe and fear of God, faith, love, humility, zeal and fervency, and a willingneſs to forgive others, as well as to be forgiven by the Lord: Laſtly, a ſoul may know when it hath communion with God, by the conſequences of duty, as when the Chriſtian is more vile in his own eyes, as *Abraham* was, gives God all the glory, ſees and bewails his defects in greateſt inlargements, when the ſpirit is left in a better frame, and fitter to bear croſſes, and perform after-duties, *&c.* I do but hint theſe things.

4. *Caſe.* Suppoſe I have prayed and prayed, and find not my heart affected; 'tis dead, dull, diſtracted, I do no good; get no good in duty, I fear I offend God: What ſhall I do?

Anſ. Such a caſe is ſad: yet conſider, 1. It may be the caſe of gracious hearts; *David* was ſo depreſſed and troubled, that he could not ſpeak, *Pſal.* 77.3,4. Gods beſt Children are ſometimes out of frame, their ſpirits unfit for duty.

2. A total neglect will not mend the matter, nor help the frame of your hearts; one ſin will never cure another; running from the fire is not the way to be warm: your hearts will not be better, but worſe, by forbearance; omiſſion indiſpoſeth.

3. Who knows but God may come in the next time? Keep upon the Royal Exchange ſtill, ply the oars, give God no reſt, gratifie not Satan by neglect. Tradeſmen keep their Markets, though for ſmall gains: you'l get ſomething at laſt worth your pains; they never were aſhamed that have waited on him: The iſſue will be good.

4. God may graciouſly accept thy obedience, though thou have not ſweet inlargement, the obedience is thine, the

the inlargement God's, he is a free Agent, and works when he pleaſeth, he loves to ſee poor ſouls tug and ſtruggle with their own hearts, though they can get little forward, yet they would be better and do better: The Father takes it well when the Child is ſtriving to obey him, though it fall very far ſhort: He ſees, the Spirit is willing, though the fleſh be weak, and accepts of upright endeavours: Nay, obſerve it, a Chriſtians conſcientious attendance upon God without inlargements, may be more acceptable to God than when he hath the ſweeteſt inlargements; becauſe there is moſt obedience in thoſe duties, but in the other a Chriſtian is (as it were) hired to performances by the Earneſt-peny of inlargements: Oh, 'tis a brave thing to perſevere in duty under diſcouragements; he that can trade when times are ſo dead, that all his wares lye upon his hand, yet trades more; ſurely his ſtock is great. So 'tis an evidence of much Faith, Love, Sincerity, when the Soul can maintain this Heavenly Trade, when his ſenſible incomes are ſmall: Yet when God thus withdraws from you, you muſt deeply lay it to heart, inquire the cauſe, make your peace with him, and ply the Throne of Grace with greater importunity: Thus much briefly, for theſe Caſes of Conſciences.

And now, beloved Friends, I have diſpatcht this Subject concerning Cloſet-prayer: What remains, but that we ſhould all fall cloſe to the conſtant practice of this duty? What do Miniſters preach Sermons, or print Books for? Is it to be ſeen and heard in publick? Is it to be applauded? Or, is it not rather to do good to peoples ſouls? And can people get any good by hearing a ſound of words, or a complemental reading what is written? Is there not ſomething elſe required of you now, even a ſetting about the conſcientious practice of what is before you? What ſay you ſirs, to this Point? Is Cloſet-Prayer a Chriſtian duty, or is it not? If it be

not, why doth Christ direct us to the right manner of performance, and assure us that our Father will reward it openly? Will God reward any thing but commanded duty? There's no question but 'tis a duty, I challenge any man to disprove it now, and to stand to his assertion another day before the God of Heaven: But I think none will deny it to be a duty; and sirs, dare any man that professeth Religion, live in the gross neglect of plain duty? Do you think it's fit it should be done, and will you not do it? Shall your own tongues be brought in as witnesses against your selves? Will you be like that Son that said, I go sir, but went not? Shall God wait your leisure, and you'l not give him a visit? Will you go into your Closets to make up your accounts, and will you not reckon streight betwixt God and your Souls? Dare you go from day to day under the guilt of a known sin? If you do not what you have read, this Book will flie in the face of conscience another day. But I am most afraid, lest Christians trifle about this work, and shuffle it off after any fashion, and so put off God with a meer outside performance, to pacifie conscience, without that warmth and life we should have in our Closets: 'Tis recorded of *Luther*, that he prayed every day three hours, and even then when his spirits were most lively, [*Per tres horas, easq; ad studia aptissimas.*] Nor were his Closet-Prayers dull, careless, heartless; but so fervent and ardent, saith *Melancthon*, that they which stood under his window where he stood praying, might see his tears falling and dropping down: Oh but where is this zeal and ardency in our secret devotion? Are we not ready to drop asleep, even upon our knees? Alas, how formal are we? the fire of God is wanting in our sacrifices: Nay, do we not take Gods Name in vain many times, and know not what we say? Oh, why do we thus forget Gods omnipresence and omniscience? Doth not he know our hearts? And should

not

not we approve our ſelves to God in our Cloſets? Yea, doth not Satan ſtand under our Cloſet-window (or rather at our Elbow) and hears what we ſay to God in our Cloſets? If you take not notice of your miſtakes in Cloſet-Prayer, Satan doth; and takes advantage by them: Indeed, I have heard ſome make this a ſcruple, whether they ſhould in ſecret confeſs heart-ſins, leſt Satan ſhould be acquainted with what he knew not before, and ſo be furniſhed with matter to accuſe them of, but an ingenious confeſſion prevents Satans accuſation, becauſe we have a promiſe of remiſſion annexed thereunto, *Rom.* 8. 33. *And who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of juſtified perſons*? He hath little reaſon to take your confeſſions, and daſh them in your teeth; ſince that was both the means and evidence of pardon: But if you fear that, you may do as *Hannah* in Prayer, ſpeak in your hearts, and then Satan cannot tell what you ſay, but your God doth: However neglect not the duty; for this you may be ſure, that Satan will catch more advantage by omiſſion or negligent performance, than by an ingenious acknowledgment of heart-ſins, though he do hear you.

Sirs, Awake to righteouſneſs, Rouze up your ſelves to the work, put not off God or conſcience with a negative anſwer: you may as well ſay, Nay, as pretend and promiſe to do it, and not perform; fall to the practice of it therefore this day, there's danger in delays, if you do it not to day, you'l be more unfit to morrow: At this inſtant, fall upon thy knees, beg a bleſſing upon this book for the good of thy ſoul and others, look upon Cloſet-Prayer as thy priviledge, as well as thy duty: 'Tis a mercy thou mayſt go to God as often as thou wilt, and for what thou needeſt: 'Tis no ſmall favour that God hath allowed thee the uſe of this privy Key to open Heaven-gates when thou haſt not the more publick key of others help in Prayer; yet this is thy incouragement, *Thy Father that ſees in ſecret will reward thee openly.*

I shall shut up all with a piece of *Herberts* Poetry, called *Artillery*.

AS I one Evening sate before my cell,
Methought a Star did shoot into my lap,
I rose and shook my cloaths, as knowing well,
That from small fires, comes oft no small mishap:
When suddenly I heard one say,
Do as thou usest, disobey,
Expell good motions from thy breast,
Which have the face of fire, but end in rest.

I, who had heard of Musick in the Sphears,
But not of speech in Stars, began to muse;
But turning to my God, whose Ministers
The Stars and all things are; If I refuse,
Dread Lord, said I, so oft my good,
Then I refuse not ev'n with blood,
To wash away my stubborn thought:
For I will do, or suffer what I ought.

But I have also Stars and Shooters too,
Born where thy Servants both Artilleries use,
My Tears and Prayers night and day do woo,
And work up to thee, yet thou dost refuse:
Not but I am (I must say still)
Much more oblig'd to do thy will,
Than thou to grant mine; but because
Thy promise now hath even set Thee thy Laws:

Then we are Shooters both; and thou dost deign
To enter combate with us, and contest
With thine own clay: But I would parley fain;
Shun not my Arrows, and behold my breast:
Yet if thou shunnest, I am thine:
I must be so, if I am mine.
There is no articling with thee:
I am but finite, yet thine infinitely.

FINIS.